

**August 2016**  
**For immediate release**

## **NEWS: Three nations subscribe to a new mutually beneficial vision of cooperation and management**

*“A climate resilient, economically prosperous, socially just and environmentally sound Cubango-Okavango River Basin.” This is the new shared, basin-wide vision of the republics of Angola, Botswana and Namibia for the management of the river that runs more than 1,000 kilometres through the neighbouring countries.*

In Angola, where the river begins, it is known as the Cubango and by the time it gets to Botswana, via Namibia, it becomes the Okavango. But despite having different names, and being home to different people and sectors, the river is home to a shared understanding. The Cubango-Okavango is a shared resource; where shared decisions lead to shared benefits generated through shared investment.

That’s a lot of sharing – something that was called for by the Member States some 20 years ago. It was then that the commission was born. And a lot has happened since OKACOM was established as technical advisor to the three riparian states. The “Visioning” process – a multi-stakeholder consultation process – was started in late 2014 and concluded in early 2015 resulted in a clear, stakeholder endorsed ‘focal point’ to guide the future development programmes of OKACOM Member States, OKACOM and their International Development Partners.

The process demonstrated that over the last 21 years OKACOM had grown from infancy to adulthood, strengthening cooperation and trust through a number of joint studies. The visioning process benefited a lot from the sound understanding of the basin. It was time to turn the scientific understanding into practical advice supporting the development of the basin.

This reflects a key shift in the focus for OKACOM. The Commission is transitioning from an organisation building a common understanding of the basin and the challenges it faces, to one that guides well-informed practical ground interventions towards the sustainable, reasonable and equitable development of the basin in support of equitable economic growth and poverty eradication, while ensuring ecological sustainability, in each of its Member States. It is the Vision that serves to provide a focus for all upcoming studies and initiatives, aligning them towards the same objectives.

And while this cooperation and trust building takes time, the big question is not what the cost of mutually beneficial decision might be, but what is the cost might be if we don’t cooperate.

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### **About OKACOM**

As technical advisor to the three riparian states, OKACOM alerts the governments of Angola, Botswana and Namibia about transboundary issues in the basin and facilitates an ongoing dialogue among the basin's stakeholders. OKACOM's work is advisory in nature, guided through meetings of the Commission and the Okavango Basin Steering Committee and informed by the technical advice of its task forces and special advisors. OKACOM's Secretariat provides day-to-day support for the Commission's work, and partner organisations and projects fund and carry out activities on the ground that are aligned to the Cubango-Okavango Strategic Action Programme.

## **OKACOM's corporate values**

OKACOM's central mandate is derived from the Member States - Angola, Botswana and Namibia - as articulated through the OKACOM Agreement and several other keystone documents.

These include including the Transboundary Diagnostic Assessment, the Strategic Action Programme and three National Action Plans. Core to successfully delivering the mandate is a commitment by all of the OKACOM organs to conduct all OKACOM business with the following values:

- OKACOM is a transparent and accountable organisation, and all actions will be conducted in the spirit of good neighbourliness and close cooperation;
- OKACOM will always provide advice to member states and key stakeholders in the spirit of agreed national, regional and international conventions, using the best scientific information and evidence based opinion available;
- OKACOM will promote improved livelihoods for basin residents, ensuring that the sustainable and equitable utilisation of the resources of the basin include significant efforts for poverty reduction;
- OKACOM will conduct its activities in an inclusive way, ensuring that equitable, sustainable utilisation and equal opportunity at all levels are always pursued and promoted;
- OKACOM will always act to promote the concept of a shared basin-wide vision and jointly agreed decision framework in all its actions.

For more information on OKACOM, visit [www.okacom.org](http://www.okacom.org)

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*The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission*