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For immediate release

NEWS: Joint water vision to guide growth and development on the Cubango-Okavango

“Shared resource; shared decisions; shared benefits generated through investment”. After more than 20 years of water cooperation, this is the joint vision that will help steer Angola, Botswana and Namibia in their future development and how the Cubango-Okavango will play a part in that future.

“The intention to set up the commission came from the Member States themselves,” says Dr Ebenizário Chonguiça, Executive Secretary for the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM).

OKACOM was established by the Republics of Angola, Botswana and Namibia under the 1994 OKACOM Agreement, underpinned by the spirit of regional cooperation with the mandate to advise Member States on matters of common concern in the River Basin; the conservation, development and sustainable utilisation of water resources in the Cubango-Okavango.

“This region is confronted with high levels of water scarcity, high levels of biodiversity and high levels of poverty. The three Member States brainstormed the three areas of concern, forgetting political boundaries by uplifting people, but protecting biodiversity.”

The Commission advises river stakeholders so they can plan growth and development that is considerate to all these factors. With the river running more than 1,100km and a delta that covers 68,640 square kilometres, the Cubango-Okavango is home to more than a million people, yet the management of the water resource has impacts right across the Member States and indeed the entire SADC region.

“Countries have different development priorities, and yet we need to cooperate around this resource. We’ve only been able to achieve that through developing a level of trust,” said Dr Chonguiça during the Sixth Africa Water Week, held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. “Transboundary planning requires time and trust building. If Member States don’t trust each other, then we have a serious problem.

OKACOM has been the vehicle through which cooperation has been achieved despite political boundaries. The commission works with Member States to reduce poverty, improve water, energy and food security, promotes gender and social equity throughout its projects, and helps promote employment and wealth while

doing its best to preserve and safeguard the natural resources of the Cubango-Okavango river in an integrated manner.

While the river goes by different names, is used by different people, and for different purposes, under OKACOM, the river and its basin is home to one community and one vision.

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.

For more information on OKACOM, visit www.okacom.org

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OKACOM

The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission