

Sharing the Zambezi: The importance of cooperation

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VICTORIA FALLS – Mosi oa Tunya, meaning the smoke that thunders is the name in the local Tonga language for the majestic Victoria Falls. This awe inspiring setting on the border of Zambia and Zimbabwe played host to the Zambezi Basinwide Stakeholders' Forum and Exhibition which took place from the 27th to 29th of November. The theme of the forum was "Championing effective Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) in the Zambezi River Basin".

The forum was convened for the third year running under the Zambezi Action Plan Project 6, Phase II (ZACPRO 6.2) - a Southern African Development Community (SADC) initiative. This was in partnership with The World Conservation Union's Regional Office for Southern Africa (IUCN-ROSA), Global Water Partnership Southern Africa (GWP SA), SADC/DANIDA Awareness Creation Component, the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC) and the Institute for Water and Sanitation Development (IWSD).

More than 150 stakeholders from a consortium of organisations working in the Zambezi river basin were present at the forum. This included local communities, representatives from ministries of environment, water, justice, finance, fisheries, forestry, agriculture and energy; river basin organizations, parliamentarians, local government, NGOs, universities/research institutions, the media and private sector.

The Zambezi river basin is shared by eight nations - Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe- and is home to more than 45 million people. The gathered stakeholders explored how people in these eight countries can share the benefits from the water resources reasonably and equitably. Participants discussed IWRM issues in the basin and had the opportunity to contribute to the formulation of an IWRM Strategy for the Zambezi river basin.

In his opening speech, Honourable Munacho Mutezo, Zimbabwe's Minister of Water Resources and Infrastructural Development, emphasised how the recommendations from the Forum should be disseminated to the wider stakeholders and that there continues to be a push forward to move from discussion to practice. This includes the upcoming establishment of the Zambezi Watercourse Commission (ZAMCOM) which will be the central institution for water management of the Zambezi Basin. The Minister stated that the Commission will aid in giving "voices to the voiceless" in the basin.

The three days of the Forum were productive and participants were able to meaningfully contribute to the Zambezi Basin IWRM Strategy. As ZAMCOM is rolled out in the coming years, the consultative process of building the institution and will ensure effective management of the great Zambezi River.

To learn more, please visit www.zacpro.org

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