MEDIA RELEASE

Angola, Namibia and South Africa to sign historic environmental accord

Government ministers from Angola, Namibia and South Africa will meet in the Angolan city of Benguela today, March 18, to sign a groundbreaking environmental treaty.

The Benguela Current Convention is a formal agreement between the three governments that seeks to bring long-term social and economic benefits to the people of the Benguela, a region that takes its name from the Benguela Current – the cold northward flowing ocean current that washes the shores of all three countries.

The Benguela Current also defines the boundaries of the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem (BCLME), an area of ocean space stretching from Port Elizabeth in South Africa to the province of Cabinda in the north of Angola. The BCLME is regarded as one of the richest ecosystems on earth, with ecosystem goods and services estimated to be worth at least US$ 54.3 billion per year. Offshore oil and gas production, marine diamond mining, coastal tourism, commercial fishing and shipping are some of the most important industrial activities that take place in the region.

By signing the Benguela Current Convention, Angola, Namibia and South Africa will agree to manage the BCLME in a cooperative and sustainable way for the benefit of coastal people who depend on the ecosystem for food, work and well-being.

The Convention will also establish the Benguela Current Commission – in existence since 2007 – as a permanent inter-governmental organisation with a mandate to promote the long-term conservation, protection, rehabilitation, enhancement and sustainable use of the BCLME. By working through the Commission, the governments of the three countries will strive to ensure that industrial development progresses in an environmentally responsible manner and that they work together to minimise pollution, harmonise maritime policies, laws and regulations, and monitor and manage fisheries in a cooperative way.

At the heart of the Convention is the concept of the ecosystem approach: a long-term approach that aims to maintain ecosystem goods and services for sustainable use, while recognising that humans are an integral part of the process.

“The historic signing of the Benguela Current Convention represents the culmination of many years of research, consultation and negotiation, all of which have been carried out in a spirit of trust and cooperation,” said Hashali Hamukuaya, Executive Secretary of the Benguela Current Commission.

“The signing of this unique multilateral agreement is the next logical step after nearly two decades of collaboration between South Africa, Namibia and Angola.”

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