MEDIA RELEASE

Benguela Current Convention to cement two decades of multilateral cooperation

Monday 18 March: Government ministers from Angola, Namibia and South Africa will attend a ceremony in the Angolan city of Benguela, today where they will sign the Benguela Current Convention and celebrate almost two decades of collaboration in the study and management of the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem (BCLME).

Marine scientists from the three countries have been working together since 1995, when they first began to share knowledge and understanding of the BCLME through the regional science programme BENEFIT (Benguela Environment Fisheries Training Interactions Programme). Between 2002 and 2008, scientists and managers worked together through the BCLME Programme, a collaborative initiative that was funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The BCLME Programme laid the groundwork for the three countries of the Benguela to manage the region's valuable marine and coastal resources at the ecosystem level. It funded 75 projects which collectively improved knowledge of the BCLME and recommended strategies for the transboundary management of fisheries, marine mining, oil and gas production and exploration, coastal development, biodiversity and pollution.

In 2007, the countries signed an Interim Agreement and established the Benguela Current Commission (BCC) – an inter-governmental organisation with a mandate to promote the long-term conservation, protection, rehabilitation, enhancement and sustainable use of the BCLME. Since then the Commission has coordinated comprehensive Science, Training and Capacity Building programmes and the drafting and negotiation of the text of the Benguela Current Convention.

Once the Convention is signed, the BCC will become a permanent inter-governmental institution through which the three countries will continue to work and collaborate.

Though it is funded by the governments of Angola, Namibia and South Africa, the BCC has attracted funding and support from a wide range of organisations and institutions. For example, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) provided funding and support for regional cooperation since the early 1990s. Their support was instrumental to the creation of the BCC.

The Government of Norway supports the implementation of the BCC Science Programme; the Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA) has supported a Training and Capacity Building programme, and the European Union has provided a grant to fund the ECOFISH project which is expected to modernise and improve the management of key marine fisheries in Angola, Namibia and South Africa.

Other supporters include the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, through its EAF-Nansen project, and the global conservation organisation WWF.
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