

ZAMBEZI WATERCOURSE COMMISSION



INTRODUCTION

The Zambezi Watercourse Commission (ZAMCOM) is a major river basin organisation in Africa. It was established in 2014 as an intergovernmental organisation that brings together eight Riparian States. The Riparian States are Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia; and Zimbabwe.

The basis for the cooperation is the Agreement on the Establishment of the Zambezi Watercourse Commission which was signed in 2004 and came into force in 2011. The Commission is headquartered in Harare, Zimbabwe.

VISION AND MISSION

ZAMCOM's vision and mission draw from regional aspirations, the Integrated Water Resources Management Strategy and Implementation Plan for the Zambezi River Basin; and the ZAMCOM Agreement. The vision envisages a future characterised by equitable and sustainable utilisation of water for social and environmental justice, regional integration and economic benefit for present and future generations. In pursuit of that future, ZAMCOM strives to promote the equitable and reasonable utilisation of the water resources of the Zambezi Watercourse as well as the efficient management and sustainable development thereof.

FUNCTIONS OF ZAMCOM

The functions of ZAMCOM include the following:

- To promote, support, coordinate and harmonise the management and development of the water resources of the Zambezi Watercourse;
- To collect, evaluate and disseminate all data and information on the Zambezi Watercourse as may be necessary for the implementation of the Agreement;
- To advise Member States on measures necessary for the avoidance of disputes among Member States with regard to planning, management, utilisation, development, protection and conservation of the Zambezi Watercourse; and,
- To foster greater awareness among the inhabitants of the Zambezi Watercourse regarding the equitable and reasonable utilisation and efficient management and sustainable development of the resources of the Zambezi Watercourse

ORGANS OF ZAMCOM

ZAMCOM has three key organs. The highest organ is the Council of Ministers which comprises Ministers of Water from the Riparian States. It is ZAMCOM's supreme decision making body. The next organ is the ZAMCOM Technical Committee (ZAMTEC) which is tasked with advising Council and implementing policies and decisions of Council. The ZAMCOM Secretariat (ZAMSEC) provides technical and administrative services to Council under the supervision of ZAMTEC.

DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

The Zambezi River Basin is projected to be home to over 51 million people by 2025. In addition to meeting the basic needs of these people, and sustaining a rich and diverse natural environment, the river plays a central role in the economies of the eight riparian states. A combination of sustained economic growth and mounting socio-economic challenges provide new opportunities and increasing development pressures on the resources of the basin. Addressing these development pressures requires basin-wide understanding and agreement in order to ensure cooperative, harmonised development in a defined and sustainable development space.

THE CURRENT WORK PORTFOLIO OF ZAMCOM

The Commission is currently facilitating, coordinating and enabling a number of activities aimed at implementing the ZAMCOM Agreement; and ensuring that the benefits of trans-boundary water cooperation are realised. Work is currently proceeding in the following core areas:

- Zambezi Basin Strategic Planning and Development**

River basin planning is crucial for successfully managing and developing shared water resources as it allows for the coordinated and integrated implementation of activities in the context of efficient management and sustainable development. River basin planning also allows for cooperation among the Riparian States and the identification and implementation of projects and programmes that provide sustainable benefits from a basin-wide perspective.



ZAMCOM is currently developing the Strategic Plan for the Zambezi Watercourse. The Plan is defined as, “.....a development plan comprising a planning tool and process for the identification, categorisation and prioritisation of projects and programmes for the efficient management and sustainable development of the Zambezi Watercourse”.

In addition, ZAMCOM continues to coordinate, facilitate and enable various “hard” and “soft” investments; and development processes in the basin.

(b) Water Resources Management/Water Resources Information Systems

One of the major functions of the Commission relates to the collection, evaluation and dissemination of all data and information on the Zambezi Watercourse in order to facilitate the implementation of the ZAMCOM Agreement.

To that end, the Zambezi Water Resources Information System (ZAMWIS) has been established in order to inform decision making and planning processes in the Zambezi Basin for the benefit of cooperative human and economic development.

The ZAMWIS is an interactive, web-based data and information system based on contemporary and historical spatial data, hydrological time series, earth observation information; knowledge products and other related information. The system is operational and enables Riparian States to routinely share data and information in the spirit of basin-wide cooperation. A basin-wide Decision Support System (DSS) is under development and will be added to the system in due course. The DSS will support planning, operations, management and monitoring –related functions.

(c) Institutional Development and Basin-wide Cooperation

One of the explicit functions of ZAMCOM is to foster greater awareness among the inhabitants of the Zambezi Watercourse regarding the equitable and reasonable utilisation and the efficient management and sustainable development of the resources of the Zambezi Watercourse.

In order to foster that awareness and implement other related functions in a manner that facilitates stakeholder participation and the creation of effective partnerships for cooperation in a trans-boundary context, ZAMCOM has put in place various additional structures. In addition to the key organs of ZAMCOM mentioned earlier, National Stakeholder Coordination Committees (NASCs); a Basin-wide Stakeholder Coordination Committee (BASC); and Basin Stakeholder Forum have been established in order to engender a sense of legitimacy and ownership while facilitating stakeholder participation.

In as far as instruments for basin-wide cooperation are concerned, the following have been developed and adopted:

- (a) Rules and Procedures for the Sharing of Data and Information Related to the Management and Development of the Zambezi Watercourse; and
- (b) ZAMCOM Procedures for the Notification of Planned Measures

Furthermore, a study entitled, “Equivalence Assessment of National Water Laws among the Riparian States in the Zambezi Basin” has been concluded. The recommendations from the study will be useful in facilitating efforts aimed at harmonising – where possible - trans-boundary water aspects for more effective cooperation.

ZAMCOM has also produced (and continues to produce) various information products including fact sheets and policy briefs on various topical issues.

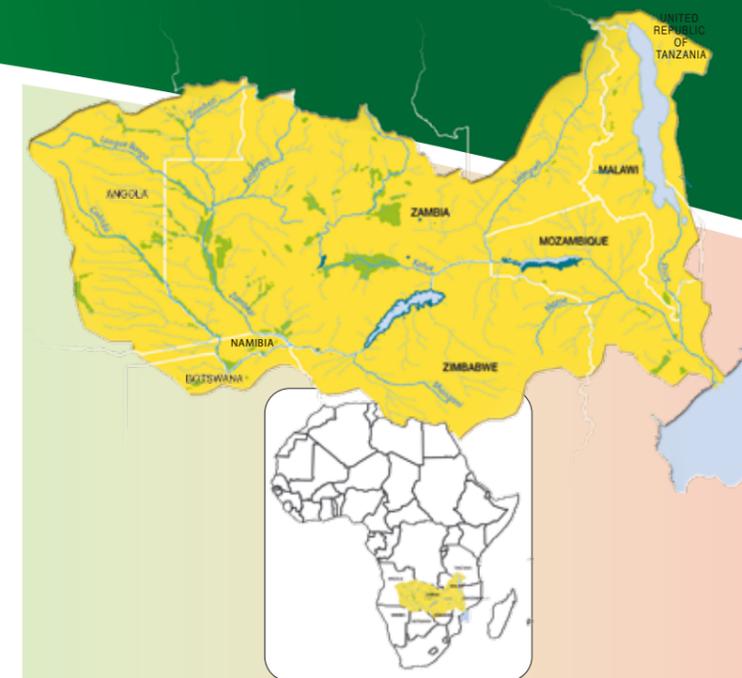
BENEFITS OF COOPERATION

The Zambezi River Basin is central to the visions of development in southern Africa whether in relation to hydropower development, agriculture, industrial development or indeed ecosystem services. The waters of the Zambezi River Basin are critical to sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction in the region. Improved and better coordinated management and development of the basin are required in order to unlock the development potential of the basin in an orderly and sustainable manner.

Through the coordinating, facilitating and enabling roles of ZAMCOM, the realisation of the benefits of trans-boundary water cooperation is underway. Some of the benefits – in addition to coordinating river basin management and planning; knowledge management; provision of information and data; prevention and resolution of disputes; and basin-wide monitoring - include:

- (a) Economic benefits resulting from economies of scale; increased economic resilience and expanded activity in key sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, tourism, mining and energy; and reduced economic impacts of floods and droughts through better information, coordination and planning;
- (b) Social and environmental benefits including improved ecological integrity; opportunities for environmental restoration and improved water quality; secure water supplies and responsible use of basin resources (upstream and downstream);
- (c) Improved regional development and integration through joint transnational infrastructure and other investments that contribute to socio-economic development, shared benefits and poverty reduction;
- (d) Peace and security benefits arising out of better diplomatic relations, improved trust through working together; and reduced risk of conflicts beyond just water (spill over effects); and,
- (e) Governance benefits that are generated by sustained trans-boundary water cooperation which lead to improved domestic water governance through the various interactions including information and experience sharing mechanisms

While ensuring economic development and realising the investment potential in the basin is primarily the responsibility of states, through national or joint action; realising that investment potential in many cases requires trans-boundary cooperation and joint planning between or among states. ZAMCOM is well positioned to catalyse investments in the basin through a coordinating and facilitative role as a basin-wide planning and management entity. That leveraging role also ensures that resources that would otherwise not be available to the basin are mobilised through ZAMCOM for the benefit of the basin and all the Riparian States.



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