

Concept Note:

Regional Guidelines for the Establishment and Development of Transfrontier Conservation Areas between SADC Member States

The Secretariat for the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Directorate for Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR) has embarked on a process to develop guidelines for the development and establishment of Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCA's) for the SADC countries. The SADC Framework on Transfrontier Conservation Areas, which was approved by the Integrated Committee of Ministers in 2007, and the SADC Protocol on Wildlife Conservation and Law Enforcement (SADC, 1999), clearly indicate that Transfrontier Conservation Areas hold the potential to deepen regional cooperation, promote peace and stability, ensure the sustainable utilisation of natural resources, as well as providing economic development opportunities through nature-based tourism. While some of these benefits are being realised in the ten TFCAs that have been established and are in various stages of development, there are an additional number of areas that have been identified for establishment, and the full potential of the existing TFCAs has yet to be realised.

It is recognised that the processes of establishing and developing TFCAs between the SADC Nations are facing challenges due to:

- Limited capacity of local communities to take advantage of opportunities offered by TFCAs;
- Weak mechanisms necessary for partnerships to enhance the role of private sector and the civil society to support the conservation and socio economic goals and potential of the TFCAs;
- TFCA officials are not fully equipped with the necessary skills to roll out the concept and reach out to all the relevant TFCA stakeholders;
- Lack of basic infrastructure such as access roads across international boundaries and to specific tourist attractions;
- Narrow focus on wildlife instead of embracing all transboundary natural resources in TFCAs; and
- Incompatibilities between the legal and policy frameworks of SADC countries and thus the enabling environments.

There remains however a commitment within SADC to promote the establishment and development of TFCAs and in doing so to ensure that:

- Local communities are actively integrated into the process to ensure that their involvement and participation in the planning and decision making processes of natural resources management actually realise tangible benefits that work towards the alleviation of their poverty;
- The consumptive and non-consumptive utilisation of natural resources are managed within thresholds of sustainability;
- The full suite of opportunities inherent within the natural resource base of these TFCAs is realised to the extent that they provide broader economic development platforms for public/private partnerships and investment opportunities; and

- The projected risks and implications of climate change are reduced with substantial contributions to ecological, social and economic resilience.

The process that the FANR has embarked upon to develop these guidelines, is one that is to be inclusive of the role players and stakeholders who are involved with the establishment and development of TFCAs in the SADC region. As such, the process will begin with a presentation to the TFCA Network at their meeting scheduled for 31 March to 1 April 2014 in Johannesburg where information will be provided on:

- The terms of reference for the guideline compilation process;
- The draft table of contents for the guidelines; and
- An indication of what content is intended within the table of contents.

Further to this SADC TFCA Network members will then be provided with an opportunity to raise critical issues that may be missing from the table of content, and/or which may need to be amended in some way. As this presentation is intended as a launch of the guideline compilation process, members will be requested to indicate where within the table of content they believe that they can provide relevant inputs, such as contributing to the compilation of sections and/or by contributing case studies that illustrate best practice within specific sections of the Guideline. It is hoped that through this process the Network members will take ownership both of the compilation process as well as the final product.

This launch workshop is the first step in a process of on-going consultation for the duration of this project, and this consultation shall happen through a “consultative group of TFCA experts” brought together within the context of the Framework Document for the SADC TFCA Network as of October 2013. This consultative group of experts will be required to:

- Liaise with colleagues and related stakeholders to consolidate the lessons that have been learned with the TFCA processes you are involved in, in preparation to participate in the launch workshop (see agenda below for more information);
- Engage actively with the best practice guideline process, by attending and participating in the launch workshop, and/or submitting written inputs to the process;
- Maintain involvement with the best practice guideline process through the provision of rapid critical review and comment on drafts that are sent through from time to time;
- Contribute to the compilation of sections of the best practice guidelines as and where relevant expertise dictates that inputs are required, either in the form of technical inputs and/or case study examples; and
- If necessary, attend and participate in a second workshop towards the end of the best practice guideline process where the final draft of the guidelines will be subjected to critical review and comment in a facilitated workshop format.

The FANR has appointed a professional service provider to drive this process and to compile the Guidelines with a view that the guidelines will be completed by the end of May 2014, subject to timeous contributions from the members of the SADC TFCA network.