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**REFORM OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICA SUB-REGIONAL INFOTERRA NETWORK (SASIN)**

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**Introduction**

1. The Southern Africa Sub-regional INFOTERRA Network (SASIN) was established in 1991 following a meeting of INFOTERRA national focal points (NFPs) from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. Financial assistance from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US-EPA) to the INFOTERRA NFP for Botswana was subsequently extended to other NFPs in the region. NFPs were equipped with computers, photocopiers and communications facilities to gain access to the Internet. The Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ireland provided additional assistance to strengthen the capacity of INFOTERRA NFPs to deliver information services on environmental matters. Technical assistance was provided by ENFO - the Environmental Information Service of the Irish Department of the Environment and Local Government. National bibliographic databases were developed and merged into a regional database ([www.enfo.ie/sasin](http://www.enfo.ie/sasin)), and fellowships for information specialists were provided by ENFO. An environmental information and awareness centre was built at Masianokeng in Lesotho. The NFP of Botswana acts as the regional service centre or hub for the SASIN sub-network.

**Country reports on restructuring of SASIN**

2. In June 2000 a meeting was convened by the regional service centre and hosted by the Swaziland Environment Authority to plan the re-structuring of INFOTERRA in each of the SASIN countries. INFOTERRA NFPs shared information and experiences about national plans to build the consortium structure in their respective countries. The country reports were focussed on the following areas:

- Priority environmental issues
- Potential consortium members
- Plans to build the consortium

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The following is a synopsis of the reports presented by the respective NFPs. Annex I gives a list of the NFPs participating in SASIN.

## **Angola**

3. The NFP is located in the Information and Documentation Centre of the Environmental Information Networks, Ministry of Fisheries and Environment.

### Priority environmental issues

Angola is a Portuguese-speaking country situated in south-west Africa, with a surface area of 1,246,700 square kilometres, 1,600 kilometres of coastline (west of the country). Angola borders the People's Republic of Congo in the north, the Democratic Republic of Congo in the north and north-east, Zambia in the east, and Namibia in the south. The population is estimated at 12 million. Angola is a former colony of Portugal and became independent in 1975. The major causes of environmental problems of Angola stem from a long period of civil conflict in the country and the high dependence on oil. The priority issues are:

- population increase (the majority of its population are living in cities with peripheral shanty towns or in camps for the displaced);
- waste management;
- water supply;
- health and sanitation;
- poverty alleviation;
- oil spills and degradation of the marine environment;
- soil degradation and desertification;
- forestry management; and
- endangered animals.

### Potential consortium members:

1. Ministry of Fisheries and Environment
2. IIM: INSTITUTO DE INVESTIGAÇÃO MARINHA (Institute for Marine Research)
3. HIDROPORTOS (consultancy firm dealing with coastal development)
4. IDF: INSTITUTO DE DESENVOLVIMENTO FLORESTAL (Institute of Forestry Development)
5. LEA: LABORATÓRIO DE ENGENHARIA DE ANGOLA (Laboratory of Engineering of Angola)
6. INE: INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE ESTATÍSTICA (National Institute of Statistics)
7. University of Angola - Faculty for Science (UAN)
8. IGCA: INSTITUTO DE GEODOSIA E CARTOGRAFIA DE ANGOLA (Angolan Institute of Geodesy and Cartography)
9. ADRA: ACÇÃO PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO RURAL E AMBIENTE (Action for Rural Development and Environment )
10. FAS: FUNDO DE APOIO SOCIAL (Fund for social support)
11. PAM: PROGRAMA ALIMENTAR MUNDIAL (WFP - World Food Programme - country office)
12. ANGOP: AGÊNCIA ANGOLA PRESS (Angolan News Agency)
13. CONSULMAR (consultancy firm dealing with coastal development)
14. MINISTÉRIO DOS PETRÓLEOS: (Ministry of Petroleum)

### Plans to build the consortium

The Government of Angola has established the Multisectoral Technical Commission for the Environment which is led by the Ministry of Fisheries and Environment. It is hoped that the new consortium structure will be somehow integrated with the Commission's work in the area of environmental information management.

## Botswana

4. The national focal point is located in the Department of Town and Regional Planning of the Ministry of Lands and Housing.

### Priority issues

Botswana with an area of 582, 000 sq.km and a population of 1.6 million is a vast and sparsely populated semi-arid sub-tropical country located in the interior of Southern Africa. The northern part of the country is a shallow depression occupied by the wetlands of the Okavango Delta, Lake Ngami and the Makgadikgadi pans. By reason of its landlocked position, Botswana experiences a climate marked by extreme temperatures during summer and winter months. Most of the country is covered by the Kalahari desert and as such, rainfall is erratic therefore water is a very scarce resource.

An awareness of traditional practices is necessary in order to understand Botswana's environmental problems. Traditional practices have greatly abused the natural resources, mainly due to poverty, and ignorance- ignorance because people think natural resources are free entities for communal exploitation. As a result of poverty in rural areas, wood is used extensively as a building material and as a source of fuel for cooking and lighting. This has resulted in deforestation particularly around settled areas. The gathering of some veld products for medicinal purposes has resulted in their extinction.

Another fundamental practice is cattle rearing. A large cattle holding is seen as a symbol of wealth so Botswana keep as many cattle as possible and this has resulted in the cattle population exceeding the carrying capacity of the land which has led to environmental degradation. Therefore overgrazing and potential future implications of excessive demand of cattle are of utmost concern to the country.

Wildlife is an abundant resource and much of the country's land is reserved as game and forest reserves, national parks and wildlife management areas. An issue of concern is environmental degradation compounded by competing pressures between human settlement, cattle and wildlife population as human settlement and grazing land encroach into wildlife management areas. More recently, wildlife has been used as a recreational resource forming the basis of a potentially very valuable tourist industry, therefore sustainable use of wildlife resource is crucial.

Botswana is also rich in minerals with diamonds being a fundamental contributor in the country's economy. There are other minerals such as copper nickel, coal and manganese. As mining, manufacturing, agricultural and other activities expand, and urbanisation increases as well, the demand for water also increases, so water shortage is an issue.

In the light of this background and in the spirit of sustainable development, due regard needs to be paid to conservation and wise use of natural resources. Recognising the seriousness of the Botswana Government in addressing its environmental problems, UNEP identified Botswana as the first country in Africa in which to initiate its Clearing House technical cooperation experiment. In 1983, the government of Botswana accepted the need for the preparation of a conservation strategy following a recommendation of the UNEP Clearing House mission. This also conformed with the UNEP World Conservation Strategy. The priority environmental issues in Botswana as identified in the preparation of the *National Conservation Strategy* are as follows:

- pressure on water resources resulting from population increase, urbanisation and development;
- degradation of rangeland pasture resources due to a variety of management and other factors;
- wood resources depletion due to commercial harvest of forests and as the main source of domestic fuel in most settlements;
- exploitation of certain veld products; and
- air, water, soil and vegetation resources pollution from industrial, agricultural and other activities.

### Potential consortium members

In 1997 the INFOTERRA NFP convened a meeting to launch the Botswana Environmental Information Network (BEINET). BEINET acts as a forum for discussion of national environmental issues and exchange of environmental information. It currently has 80 members but this number is too large to function as a consortium and, to date, no methodology has been applied to assess the capacity of BEINET members to act as key suppliers of information on thematic issues.

### Plans to build the consortium

As UNEP-WCMC is developing a methodology to assess the capacity of institutions to collect, manage and disseminate environmental information, this methodology will be applied to extract from BEINET a consortium of key institutions that is of a more manageable size. This exercise will be carried out as soon as the methodology is published and distributed by UNEP. When the members of the consortium have been identified, a meeting will be held to review the Terms of Reference for the consortium operations, and develop an action plan for the work of the consortium.

## **Lesotho**

5. The national focal point is located in the Information and Documentation Centre, Institute of Education at the National University of Lesotho.

### Priority environmental issues

Lesotho is a mountainous, land-locked country surrounded by the Republic of South Africa. Lesotho used to have abundant natural resources and an attractive environment, such as larger river valleys, forests, fauna and flora. As the country became inhabited with a growing population, environmental problems emerged. Human activities led to the devastation of the environment, and this resulted in Lesotho's cultivable land being so badly eroded. The country is full of scars (gullies) with little or no vegetation. The following are the key environmental issues in Lesotho:

- land degradation induced by both natural human activities such as poor range management practices;
- biodiversity loss;
- water supply particularly in the lowlands;
- waste management (solid waste);
- water pollution (blue rivers in industrial sites);
- eco-tourism- mountain reserves, threatened mountain wetlands by tourists in the Maluti;
- cultural heritage - management and protection of heritage sites; and
- drought and natural disasters.

### Potential consortium members

In 1995 the NFP established the Lesotho Environmental Information Network (LEINET) following a recommendation adopted at a SASIN regional management meeting in 1994. The objectives of LEINET are to:

- (a) exchange environmental information nationally;
- (b) promote environmental education and awareness raising; and
- (c) work closely with the National Environmental Secretariat to enhance access to environmental information.

LEINET is coordinated by the INFOTERRA NFP and has a membership of over 30 institutions and 150 individual members. It is anticipated that the following subset of LEINET membership will for the INFOTERRA-Lesotho consortium:

1. National University of Lesotho - Institute of Education
2. Lesotho Highlands Development Authority
3. Department of Energy
4. Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs
5. Southern African Development Community - Environment and Land Management Systems (SADC ELMS)
6. Masianokeng Environmental Centre
7. Lesotho Council of NGOs
8. Lesotho National Library Service
9. Ministry of Agriculture Information
10. National Environment Secretariat

#### Plans to build the consortium

The NFP is waiting for UNEP-WCMC to distribute the methodology to assess the capacity of institutions to collect, manage and disseminate environmental information. This methodology will be applied to extract from LEINET a consortium of key information suppliers.

#### **Malawi**

6. The national focal point is located in National Research Council of Malawi.

#### Priority environmental issues

Malawi, which is situated between Zambia and Mozambique, is endowed with a number of renewable natural resources such as land, water, fish, wildlife and forests which provide the basis for the sustainable socio-economic development of the country. Lake Malawi is a UNESCO world heritage site with over 300 species of fish. The nine key environmental issues in Malawi as identified by the *National Environmental Action Plan* are as follows:

- soil erosion;
- deforestation;
- biodiversity loss;
- water resources degradation and depletion;
- human habitat degradation;
- high population growth;
- loss of fish resources;
- air pollution; and
- climate change.

#### Potential consortium members

A national committee has been formed which identified thematic centres in the areas of agriculture, natural resources, industry and trade, and science and technology. The potential consortium members are:

1. National Research Council of Malawi
2. Agricultural Research and Technical Services (manages 7 specialised libraries)
3. Bundi College of Agriculture (manages several databases on different issues such as agriculture, environment, planning and research, women and development issues).

4. Industrial Centre (deals with design of appropriate technology and development, and has developed an experimental solar village)
5. Malawi Bureau of Standards
6. Ministry of Environmental Affairs (within this ministry there are several departments dealing with forestry, fisheries and other environmental issues)
7. Department of Meteorological Services
8. National Statistics (responsible for the gathering of raw data)
9. Department of Land Resources
10. Co-ordination Unit for the Rehabilitation of the Environment (CURE)

#### Plans to build the consortium

A meeting of potential consortium members will be convened in the last quarter of 2000 to discuss the Terms of Reference for the consortium in establishing a coordinated information service.

#### **Mozambique**

7. The national focal point is located in Documentation and Information Centre of the Ministry for Coordination of Environmental Affairs (MICOA).

#### Priority environmental issues

Mozambique is a Portuguese-speaking country situated in south-east Africa bordering with Swaziland and South Africa on the south; Tanzania on the north and Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia on the west. Mozambique became independent in 1975. Mozambique has ratified many conventions on environment (marine, biodiversity, hazardous waste, etc.) and is working on regulations for resources management. National framework legislation was approved in 1996. Mozambique suffered invaluable loss of biodiversity flora and fauna during the 16 years of civil war. The process of developing inventory and management plans is being undertaken by the Natural Resources Department and National Directorate of Forestry and Wildlife.

The key issues affecting Mozambique are mainly related to the disastrous floods this year that impacted the southern region of the country. The floods destroyed infrastructure, bridges, roads, schools and thousands of people lost houses and crops. Many animals died as well and rural communities suffered the most. The Government is setting up a national programme on flood mitigation. The programme includes both governmental and non-governmental organisations. International and national agencies have donated food, clothes, money and other forms of assistance. The identification of areas for resettlement is being undertaken. The identified environmental issues are:

- human resettlements;
- erosion particularly at coastal areas;
- urbanisation, urban sanitation;
- rural water supply;
- tourism (this is a problem because of the development of infrastructure at the coast); and
- biodiversity loss (the 16 year conflict killed many animals).

#### Potential consortium members

The Ministry for Coordination of Environmental Affairs (MICOA) is responsible for the coordination of all environmental activities in Mozambique. In 1996, the Documentation and Information Centre of MICOA established the environmental information network, RIA, composed of 40 institutions dealing with information management and services for the purpose of establishing a partnership for institutional development and capacity building of the information sector. RIA together with other key organisations provides a good basis for establishing the consortium. Potential members are as follows:

1. Ministry for Coordination of Environmental Affairs (MICOA)
2. IMPACTO (an NGO dealing with Environmental Impact Statement)
3. SEACAM (Secretariat of Eastern Africa Coastal Area Management)
4. RIA - (Environmental Information Network - includes governmental and non-governmental organisations)
5. GTA - Environmental Working Group
6. DEF - Department of Forestry Engineering
7. DCB - Department of Biological Sciences
8. IIP - Fisheries Research Institute
9. IPA - Institute of Animal Production
10. DNDR - National Directorate of Rural Development
11. DNBBF- National Directorate of Forests and Wildlife
12. DNA - National Directorate of Water
13. INIA - National Institute for Agricultural Research
14. ARA-SUL - South Regional Water Administration
15. WORLD BANK country office
16. FAO country office
17. DANIDA - Danish International Development Agency
18. SIDA - Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency
19. DNM - National Directorate of Mining
20. IDPPE - Institute of Development of Small Fisheries

#### Plans to build the consortium

A meeting of potential consortium members will be convened by MICOA in the last quarter of 2000 to explain the consortium structure to potential members and discuss the Terms of Reference for establishing a co-ordinated information service.

#### **Namibia**

8. The national focal point is located in Directorate of Environmental Affairs of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism

#### Priority environmental issues

Namibia, situated in south-west Africa, is a large but sparsely populated country. It is the most arid country south of the Sahara. At the time of its independence in 1990, Namibia inherited a vast environmental debt with its fish resources depleted and its agricultural rangeland in decline. Namibia's *Green Plan* was drafted in 1992 and presented to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The Green Plan identified and analysed the main environmental challenges facing the country and identified the actions required to address them. The environmental issues confronting Namibia are:

- desertification;
- pollution;
- environmental management policy problems arising from outdated legislation;
- human induced land degradation;
- biodiversity loss;
- bush encroachment; and
- poverty.

#### Potential consortium members:

1. Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) – website: [www.dea.met.gov.na](http://www.dea.met.gov.na)
2. Namibia Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU) - website: [www.nepru.org.na](http://www.nepru.org.na)

3. Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN) – website: [www.iwwwn.com.na/drfn/index.html](http://www.iwwwn.com.na/drfn/index.html)
4. Namibia Non-Governmental Organisations Forum (NANGOF)
5. Multi-Disciplinary Research Centre at the University of Namibia – website: [www.unam.na](http://www.unam.na)
6. National Planning Commission (NPC)

#### Plans to build the consortium

At the end of August 2000 an official invitation letter to join the consortium was sent out to identified stakeholders. The potential members will be given an opportunity of one month to respond in writing. The first consortium meeting is scheduled for mid-October 2000, whereupon the operation of the consortium will be defined.

### **Seychelles**

9. The national focal point is located in the Division of Environment of the Ministry of Environment and Transport.

#### Priority environmental issues

The Seychelles is a small island developing state (SIDS) and many of its environmental problems are typical of those found in SIDS countries. The key issues are:

- coastal erosion
- marine pollution from ships discharging effluents in the sea
- degradation of coral reefs
- wastes
- forestry

#### Potential consortium members

1. Ministry of Environment and Transport – Division of Environment
2. Maritime Park Authority
3. Birdlife ( an NGO)
4. Ministry of Lands, Utilities and Housing
5. Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation
6. Solid Waste and Cleaning Agency (SWAC)

#### Plans to build the consortium

A meeting will be called in the last quarter of 2000 to introduce the concept of an integrated environmental information service to the consortium members and draft the Terms of Reference for the provision of the service. Information on the goals and objectives of the consortium will be distributed in advance to the potential members.

### **Swaziland**

10. The national focal point is located in the Swaziland Environment Authority (SEA) which is under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Communications.

Priority issues

Swaziland is a small, land-locked country situated between Mozambique and the Republic of South Africa. The key environmental issues in Swaziland are:

- land degradation;
- soil depletion;
- desertification;
- deforestation; and
- biodiversity loss.

Potential consortium members

1. Swaziland Environment Authority (SEA)
2. Yonge Nawe Environmental Action Group (NGO)
3. Umtapo Wabomake (NGO)
4. Ministry of Agriculture
5. Renewable Energy Information Network of Swaziland (REINSWA)
6. Network of Swaziland
7. University of Swaziland Library
8. Swaziland National Library Services
9. Swaziland National Trust Commission - National Environmental Education Programme

Plans to build the consortium

A meeting was held in early 2000 but progress is stalled because the initial idea was to establish a larger environmental information exchange network. The concept of a consortium of key environmental information suppliers was circulated at the meeting. It was agreed to draft Terms of Reference (TOR) for the consortium and then organise a second meeting to finalise the TOR and develop a work plan.

**Tanzania**

11. The national focal point is located in the Environmental Information Centre of the National Environment Management Council (NEMC).

Priority environmental issues

Tanzania is the only East-African Community country that is also a member of SADC. The country is rich in natural resources and has many game reserves and national parks. The environmental issues prevalent in Tanzania are as follows:

- environmental policy and planning;
- sustainable development;
- ecosystems, parks and lakes;
- land degradation;
- marine pollution;
- climate change;
- water supply and pollution;
- pesticides use and disposal; and
- biodiversity loss.

Potential consortium members

1. National Environment Management Council (NEMC)
2. Division of Environment (Vice-President`s Office)
3. Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH)
4. Planning Commission (Presidents Office)
5. Ministry of Energy of Minerals
6. Tanzania Centre for Technology and Energy Development (TATEDO)
7. Tanzania Bureau of Standards (Ministry of Finance)
8. Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA)
9. Lake Victoria Environment Management Programme (LVEMP)
10. Institute of Resource Assessment (University of Dar es Salaam)
11. Institute of Marine Sciences - Zanzibar
12. Sokoine University of Agriculture Library (representing National Agriculture library)
13. World Wildlife Fund (WWF) –Tanzania Country office
14. Ministry of Tourism and Natural Resources
15. Tanzania Forest Research Institute (Morogoro)
16. Directorate of Meteorological Services
17. Ministry of Water

Plans to build the consortium

Letters of invitation to potential members of consortium to have a preliminary meeting in order to introduce the concept of an integrated information service on environmental matters has been sent and so far nine members have confirmed to participate. Tentative date for the meeting is October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2000. Depending on the level of commitment among participating institutions, an assessment will be carried out to determine the capacity of these institutions as key information suppliers. During the meeting issues of accessibility, modalities for information sharing including exchange formats and rights of consortium members and *modus operandi* of the consortium based on local conditions will be sorted out.

**Zambia**

12. The national focal point is located in the Information Services Unit in the National Council for Scientific Research.

Priority environmental issues

Zambia is a major copper producing country. Zambia is in the process of establishing a national environmental information network. The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources has in the last few years been implementing the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP). The implementation is funded under the Environmental Support Programme (ESP). The programme component called the Environmental Information Network Monitoring (EINMS) is setting up a Forum on Environmental Information and Data Exchange System (FEIDES) that will cover five areas of environmental concern, namely:

- forestry;
- water and sanitation;
- soil and land management;
- air quality; and
- wildlife and fisheries

Potential consortium members

EINMS has the following mandate:

- To provide action oriented environmental information to the various users and stakeholders involved in the ESP implementation in order to improve planning, decision making and implementation; and capture early lessons to be fed back into operations.
- Start building a national environmental information system with common architecture, norms and standards.
- Facilitate public access to environmental information.

Workshops have been held previously which have identified issues relating to the current status of environmental information management and others. The deliberations at this workshop strategised the process for the formation of a national network and took practical measures to implement earlier recommendations. One such measure was the appointment of a National Task Force to:

- Review the current information in relation to the formulation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- Review the legal and cost issues relating to data accessibility and utilisation, and recommend a functional legal framework for the exchange of such information in Zambia.
- Formulate the structure of the forum, and work out modalities of the functioning of such a structure.
- Formulate and recommend guidelines on the membership and co-operation of the firm, aiming at forging functional links between the relevant member institutions and
- Draft a MoU for the purpose of creating a forum amongst member institutions, which will be ratified by stakeholders at a policy review meeting to be held at the end of the study.

Plans to build the consortium

EINMS organised a stakeholders workshop in Siavonga to discuss the draft MOU drawn by the Task Force and other issues relating to the institutionalisation of FEIDES. The stakeholders were identified from the five areas of environmental concerns. The MOU was modified and adopted and it is ready for ratification by stakeholders and then FEIDES will become operational. FEIDES will be autonomous and in turn have its own guiding principles, structure, programme of activities and will be self-regulating.

**Zimbabwe**

13. The national focal point is located in the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Priority environmental issues

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country bordered by Zambia to the North, Mozambique to the East, South Africa to the South, and Botswana to the West, and shares a small border with Namibia at the point of the Caprivi Strip. It covers an area of 390 757 square kilometres. Zimbabwe attained independence from the United Kingdom in April, 1980, after having spent the previous 90 years under British colonial rule.

During the colonial era, the majority of the people were marginalised to the poorest parts of the country with poor soils and unreliable rainfall. At present, about 60 % of the 13,5 million population are still living in these "rural areas". Poverty, land degradation, deforestation are therefore major issues in the country. The environmental issues in Zimbabwe are:

- growing poverty and its attendant problems of resource over-exploitation;
- land degradation due to both human activities and natural phenomena, and the impact these have on food security;

- continued loss of forests due to over exploitation;
- conservation of biodiversity to minimise losses as a result of human activities (the country has several endangered species of flora and fauna);
- threat of alien invasive species such as the water hyacinth in some of the country's water bodies;
- water scarcity due to variability of rainfall and ineffective water management measures, including pricing and pollution control;
- atmospheric pollution due to industrialisation and other factors;
- drought and climate change; and
- law reform.

#### Potential consortium members

1. Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
2. Air Pollution Unit
3. Central Statistics Office
4. Department of Water Affairs
5. Department of Meteorology
6. Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management
7. Department of Research and Specialist Services
8. Environment 2000 Foundation
9. Environment and Development Activities
10. Environment Liaison Forum
11. Forestry Commission
12. Geographical Association of Zimbabwe
13. Local Authorities
14. National Association of NGOs
15. National Herbarium and Botanical Gardens
16. Regional Network of Environmental Experts (ZERO)
17. Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC-IMERCSA)
18. Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources
19. Southern Centre for Energy and Environment
20. Scientific and Industrial Research and Development Centre (SIRDC)
21. Standards Association of Zimbabwe
22. The World Conservation Union-Regional Office for Southern Africa- (IUCN-ROSA)
23. Wildlife Society of Zimbabwe
24. Wildlife Fund for Nature
25. Zambesi Society
26. UNDP country office
27. Zimbabwe Information Service
28. Zimbabwe Inter Africa News Agency (ZIANA)
29. University of Zimbabwe

#### Plans to build the consortium

The NFP is planning to convene a meeting of all these stakeholders in the second half of 2000 to introduce the consortium concept and determine the commitment of the institutions to contribute to a national environmental information service.

## **Conclusion**

15. Most of the countries in the SADC region have similar environmental problems therefore exchange of information between countries on common issues is vitally important. As a sub-network of INFOTERRA, the SASIN member countries are collectively moving towards the new structure for INFOTERRA at the national level. The issue of having a Terms of Reference for the operation of the consortium has been identified by several countries and Zambia is well advanced in this area.

16. The number of institutions in the national consortia varies from six (Namibia and Seychelles) up to twenty-nine (Zimbabwe) and consideration must be given to optimising the size of each national consortium. Three SADC countries – Republic of Congo, Mauritius, and Republic of South Africa – are presently not participating in the SASIN network. The last regional management meeting of SASIN held at Ezulwini, Swaziland in June 2000 recommended that UNEP invite these countries to join SASIN.

**Annex I**

**SASIN National Focal Points**

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