

*News Report***Launch Of Africa's First Transfrontier Park****12 May 2000**

AFRICA'S first formally declared trans-border conservation area – the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP) on the border of South Africa and Botswana – was officially launched today (*May 12, 2000*) by SA President Thabo Mbeki and Botswana President Festus Mogae.

Situated in the southern Kalahari, the KTP joins together Botswana's former Gemsbok National Park and South Africa's former Kalahari Gemsbok National Park, making it the largest conservation area in the southern hemisphere with an area of almost 38 000 km².

The launch took place on the border between the Two Rivers and Twee Rivieren camps at the southern tip of the new park, about 250 km north of Upington. It was attended by more than 500 guests including Mr Valli Moosa, SA Minister of Environment Affairs & Tourism,

Mr D K Kwelagobe, Botswana's Minister of Commerce and Industry, members of the diplomatic corps, senior government officials, corporate donors and representatives of neighbouring communities.

The Park is managed by a Transfrontier Management Committee comprised of representatives from South African National Parks (SANP) and Botswana's Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP).

"This is the first concrete example of a successful transfrontier conservation area on the African continent and this historic development marks a further step in the advancement of African unity," says Mr Mavuso Msimang, CEO of SANP.

"Today's launch confirms the historic bilateral agreement signed between the two countries on 7 April 1999. The agreement binds the two countries towards creating legislation which will enable the harmonious integration and management of the park as a single ecological tourism unit," says Mr Joseph Matlhare Director of the DWNP.

The main benefits for South Africa and Botswana include the following:

- Guaranteeing the long-term conservation of the valuable wildlife resources in the southern Kalahari, thus helping to maintain the integrity of the entire Kalahari ecosystem
- Pooling of expertise and experience on a good neighbourly basis
- Raising the international profile of this important conservation area through joint promotional campaigns, thereby enhancing its status and potential as a tourist destination
- Maximising the tourism potential of the Park and surrounding areas, which will generate economic benefits for both countries, especially to the local communities living nearby.
- Strengthening of political ties and the promotion of regional peace and stability through mutual co-operation.

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