

FFEM and CI sign agreement for financing of the Western Kgalagadi Conservation Corridor Project

The Western Kgalagadi Conservation Corridor (WKCC) Project is an initiative that was identified by the Botswana Government in collaboration with Conservation International and the French Global Environmental Fund (Fonds Français pour l'Environnement mondial - FFEM). The project has two overarching aims: to conserve the biodiversity and integrity of the Western Kalahari ecosystem

by establishing ecological corridors between the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) and the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP), and to improve the quality of life of the local communities. FFEM is supporting this four-year project with 935 000 Euros (close to P8 Million). The total project budget is USD 4,134,929 (over P25 Million) and Conservation International will be matching the

FFEM's contribution through private donors and in-kind contributions from the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism - through the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) - and the European Union. The project will be implemented by Conservation International (CI), in collaboration with a number of partners including the DWNP, University of Botswana and a number of local NGOs.

Wildlife migratory movements between these two protected areas have become disrupted through various changes in land use and wildlife populations have declined in the region since the 1970s. The proposed "conservation corridors" will assist in restoring ecosystem integrity in the area and enable historic migratory movements, along rainfall gradients between the two protected areas, to be re-established.

The south-western Kalahari is a very remote and dry area, which has hitherto been fairly inaccessible and undeveloped. Poverty levels are high and there are still few employment opportunities. This project intends to provide community upliftment and capacity building for the nearby communities through tourism developments and the initiation of other income generating activities while ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources.

The signing ceremony took place at the Residence of the French Ambassador on Thursday 19th April, 2007.