Report of the Mission to the 3rd ORASECOM Forum of Parties (7-9 December 2016)

by Dr P.K. Kenabatho, University of Botswana

# Purpose of the Report

The report is based on the attendance of Dr Kenabatho to the 3rd Ordinary Meeting of the ORANGE-SENQU River Commission Forum of the Parties on behalf of UNESCO-IHP, and Presentation of the Stampriet Project to ORASECOM. The Mission was done from the 7th to the 9th December 2016 at Emperors Palace in Johannesburg, South Africa.

# Dates of Meeting:

## Day 3 of the Conference (but Day 1 for Dr Kenabatho)

08th December 2016

### Morning Session:

Dr Kenabatho attended the Preparatory Meeting by the Senior Government Officials of the ORASECOM countries, in which the ORASECOM Secretariat presented Agenda items that will be discussed with/presented to the Ministers. Among the Agenda items was the proposal to have a Presentation on the Stampriet Project by Dr Kenabatho. The proposal was adopted and Dr Kenabatho was requested to attend and present the Stampriet Project on the 9th December 2016.

### Afternoon Session

The afternoon session was dedicated to the Joint Permanent Technical Committee Meeting (JPTC), a bilateral Committee between Botswana and South Africa. As per the attached agenda items, Dr Kenabatho and Mr Sakhile (Department of water and sanitation, South Africa) presented the Ramotswa Transboundary Groundwater Project on behalf of the International Water Management Institute (IWMI).

## Day 4 of the Conference (but Day 2 for Dr Kenabatho)

**3rd Ordinary Meeting of the ORANGE-SENQU River Commission Forum of the Parties, Emperors palace, South Africa: 9th December 2016**

(Meeting for the honourable Ministers)

The Meeting was scheduled to start at 09:00am as per the attached Agenda. However, there was some delay with the meeting starting at 11:15 am. The first session was dedicated to the Remarks from the African Development Bank, Ministers from Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa.

### Presentation of the Stampriet Project

Following their presentations, Dr Kenabatho presented the Stampriet Project, titled “**Stampriet Transboudnary Aquifer System (STAS) assessment: *Main achievements and way forward” .*** Dr Kenabatho started by giving a background of UNESCO-IHP’s participation in globally recognised groundwater projects such as the Internationally Shared Aquifer Resources management (ISARM). He then went on to present the overall objectives of the Governance of Groundwater Resources in Transboundary Aquifers (GGRETA) and the three key study areas in Central America, Asia and Southern Africa. Following this brief background, he presented the details of the Stampriet Transboundary Aquifer Systems (STAS), particularly its main achievements in Phase I, and the way forward in Phase II (as premised on the three outcomes for the Project). In his Presentation, he highlighted and appreciated the role of UNESCO-IHP, as a coordinator of the Project in both phases of the project. He equally appreciated the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) as the sponsor of the Project. The three countries of Botswana, Namibia and South Africa were also appreciated as partners and beneficiaries of the Project. As a way of conclusion, Dr Kenabatho highlighted some data gaps, where, if possible, countries may contribute resources in order to fill the gaps identified by the Project.

### Discussion and feedback following the Presentation

The Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry from Namibia appreciated the Presentation as informative and relevant. He then wanted to know how much water is available for his people as a politician since this is the question that he is often asked by the people. In addition, he also commented that since groundwater has been discovered/studied since 1912 (i.e. based on the history presented in the Project), is it not time now that it is fully understood to an extent that people can start benefiting fully? In his response, Dr Kenabatho appreciated the questions from the honourable minister, and responded by saying that it is difficult to give numbers in terms of groundwater availability in the STAS. However, he indicated that as mentioned in his presentation and based on the available data gathered from Phase I, there is until present no long-term groundwater depletion or pollution in the area. Despite this fact, within the context of climate change, the fragility of the system could create conditions of stress in the future if there is overexploitation. He further elaborated that Phase II will assist in further understanding the complexities of the STAS, particularly through intensive scientific studies such as establishment of numerical hydrogeologic modeling. The Minister appreciated the response from Dr Kenabatho.

The Chair of the session requested the house to go for a tea break since the Agenda for the day was long. After the break, the meeting continued and lasted up to 14:45PM before breaking for lunch, which was the last activity of the meeting.