

Giant Okavango-Zambezi conservation zone launched in Africa

18 August 2011

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A picture taken in April 2011 shows Victoria Falls. Five southern African countries signed an agreement Thursday to create a giant conservation zone in the Okavango and Zambezi river basins that stretches over an area half the size of France.

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The "conservation and tourism area" will cover parts of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe, linking 14 national parks and nature reserves, including world-famous Victoria Falls and the Okavango [River delta](#).

Leaders said they hoped the agreement would protect the region's rich biodiversity and give root to a thriving ecotourism industry.

"It's the largest protected tourism zone in the world," an official from the 15-nation Southern African Development Community said in announcing the deal at the regional bloc's summit in Angola.

The region is known for rare species including [cheetahs](#), African wild dogs, black sable and rhinos. It is also home to some 250,000 elephants.

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