
Mozambique and Botswana sign MoU on new deepwater port and railway

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The governments of Mozambique and Botswana signed a MoU on July 16th 2010 to develop a deep water port at Techobanine point in Mozambique's southernmost district of Matutuine.

Besides building a port that can receive bulk mineral ships, oil tankers and passenger vessels, the project also involves a new 1,100 kilometre railway linking Techobanine to Botswana and passing through Zimbabwe. The document was signed, in Techobanine itself, by Mozambican Transport Minister Mr Paulo Zucula and his Botswanan counterpart, Mr Frank Ramsden.

Mr Adelino Mesquita CEO of Mozambique's port and rail company of CFM said that "The budget for studies and for the construction of the port and railway is estimated at around seven billion US dollars. The preparatory phase, including the mobilization of finance, should be completed by the end of 2011 and the first phase of construction will take place between 2012 and 2015."

Mr Zucula told the ceremony that "The MoU marks the rebirth of a dream for a deep water port in Matutuine that dates from the 1960s. The original site indicated for such a port was Dobela Point, but it has been shifted to Techobanine largely for environmental reasons."

He said that "This memorandum of understanding has been long awaited, given its importance in relaunching the foundations for a common strategic vision for the Techobanine Point project, in order to meet the challenges of the transport sector and the expansion of the regional market."

Mr Ramsden declared that the memorandum marks an important stage in strengthening the relations of cooperation between the two countries. He said that "As a country of the hinterland, Botswana needs exits to the sea in neighboring countries, to facilitate its imports and exports. With this port we shall encourage trade and tourism between our peoples."

Botswana believes a new port and railway will dramatically reduce the time taken to move its imports and exports. According to Taolo Sebonego, the chairperson of the Botswana rail company, with the country's current dependence on South African ports, it takes up to 22 days for merchandise to arrive, be unloaded and reach its destination. He expected the new port and railway to reduce this period to an average of just six days.

Mr Tomas Salomao executive secretary of the Southern African Development Community stressed that SADC will give its full support "because we believe this project is important for the region."

(Sourced from Ports & Ships)

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