Voyage provides insight into fish resources

Students of oceanography gained valuable insight into the mechanics of the highly variable Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem, thanks to a co-operative research programme that was being conducted from the deck of the German research vessel, *Alexander v. Humboldt*.

The *Alexander v. Humboldt* which was operating off the coast of Namibia and Angola since December last year stopped in Cape Town at the end of April to conduct a student demonstration cruise. Thereafter, it set sail for Walvis Bay with several South African scientists and students on board.

During the six-month voyage, scientists sampled a variety of marine organisms between Cape Town and the Orange River mouth as part of a longer-term study which aims to identify regions of benthic (ie. crab, shrimp, marine worms etc.) biodiversity along South African shores.

Over 100 scientists from eight German institutions and nine regional scientific institutions – including fisheries departments and universities – participated in the six-month voyage which was funded by the German ministry of education for the state of Mecklenburg Vorpommern, the federal ministry of Science and Technology in Germany, the Max Planck Institute for Marine Microbiology, the University of Hamburg and the Baltic Sea Research Institute. Local funders were the co-operative scientific programme, BENEFIT (the Benguela Environment Fisheries Interaction and Training Programme), and the regional Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem (BCLME) Programme.

The scientific focus of the *Alexander v. Humboldt's* voyage was environmental and ecological issues that were identified by researchers from South Africa, Namibia and Angola. The primary aims of the expedition were to understand the role of oceanographic zones in the reproduction of important fish species; identify the causes of hydrogen sulphide and sulphur eruptions and their impacts on living marine resources; predict the possible impacts of global climate change on the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem; and on-the-job training, data collection for masters and doctoral students, technical training and presentation of equipment for possible use on the new Angolan research vessel *Tombwa*.