



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BENGUELA CURRENT LARGE MARINE ECOSYSTEM PROGRAMME

## Countries of east Africa unite to manage marine resources



**R**epresentatives of nine countries participating in the Agulhas Somali Current Large Marine Ecosystems (ASCLME) project met in Durban in January for the first steering committee meeting and inception workshop of the project.



Delegates from Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa and Tanzania met to discuss the implementation of the project. They were joined by representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which is responsible for implementing the project through its country office in Mauritius, and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), which is providing administrative and logistical support.

The first day's proceedings focused on issues related to policy, protocol and management of the project, as well as internal project issues such as budget, delivery, monitoring and evaluation. The second day, attended by national, regional and international observers, expanded the discussion to include technical and scientific matters.

According to Dr David Vousden, director of the ASCLME project, the meetings provided a platform for

the nine countries to re-state their intention to cooperate and work together to ensure the long-term sustainability of the living resources of the ASCLME region, and thereby positively influence the societies and economies of the region.

The ASCLME project centres on the two large marine ecosystems (LMEs) of the western Indian Ocean region: the Somali Current LME which extends from the Comoros Islands and the northern tip of Madagascar to the horn of Africa, and the Agulhas Current LME which stretches from the northern end of the Mozambique Channel to Cape Agulhas. An estimated 56 million people depend on the resources of the two LMEs.

Over the next five years, the ASCLME project will gather new and important information about the complex ocean currents of the region and the ways they interact with and influence the climate, biodiversity and economies of the

Western Indian Ocean region. Environmental threats, such as marine pollution and declining fisheries will be documented in a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) for each of the LMEs and a Strategic Action Programme will be developed to help the countries of the region to tackle these environmental threats.

"The Agulhas and Somali currents have a major influence on the societies and economies of the Western Indian Ocean region," says Dr Vousden, "yet there are large gaps in our understanding of their oceanographic processes, biodiversity and other fundamentals."

A series of well-coordinated oceanographic research cruises will begin in August. These will gather information about the oceanography and living marine resources of the two LMEs.



Scientists and managers from the nine countries of the western Indian Ocean region met in Durban for the inception workshop of the ASCLME project. They are (front row) Harrison Ong'anda (Kenya); Angus Patterson (South Africa); Satyajit Ramechurn (UNDP Mauritius); Hajaririna Razafindrainibe (Madagascar); Ronny Renaud (Seychelles); Middle row: David Vousden, project director; Ashley Naidoo (South Africa); Elena Gari (UNDP Mauritius); Mitrasen Bhukajee (Mauritius); Akiko Yamamoto (UNDP/GEF); Farid Anasse (Comoros); Claudio Caldarone (UNDP, Mauritius) Back row: Policarpo Napica (Mozambique); David La Roche (GEF); Johann Augustyn (South Africa); Peter Scheren (UNEP); Malir Aliyev (UNOPS); Paul Skelton (South Africa) and James Stapley (ASCLME project).