

Media Release

Under the auspices of the Vice Presidency in charge of the Ministry for Agriculture, Fishing and Environment, Energy, Industry and Craft industry, senior representatives of the government of the Comoros and scientists will go to meet the research vessel, *Dr. Fridtjof Nansen*, on Monday November 2, 2009 in port of Mutsamudu, Anjouan.

The *Dr Fridtjof Nansen* is one of the most sophisticated scientific research vessels in the world. It has docked in Moroni after completing a comprehensive scientific survey of the marine and coastal environment of Comoros. The survey forms part of a 106-day scientific voyage that aims to improve understanding of the physical, chemical and biological characteristics of the Mozambique shelf, the southern and west Madagascar shelf, the Comoros Gyre and the seamounts of the southern Indian Ocean

The voyage of the *Dr Fridtjof Nansen* has been organized by the Agulhas and Somali Current Large Marine Ecosystems (ASCLME) Project, the South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Project (SWIOFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, through its Ecosystems Approach to Fisheries (EAF-Nansen) project.

Scientists working from the research vessel are deploying a range of oceanographic equipment in a bid to gather as much information about the western Indian Ocean as possible.

“This is fundamental, pioneering research in an area of the world that is still uncharted territory in oceanographic terms,” says Dr David Vousden, Director of the ASCLME Project. “It is vital for the countries of the region to understand more about these waters. You can’t manage a marine ecosystem unless you have a basic idea of what the currents are doing and the effects they have on marine life.”

The ASCLME Project is coordinating the efforts of nine countries in the western Indian Ocean region, assisting them to introduce an ecosystem approach to managing their shared marine and coastal resources. The ecosystem approach recognizes that all elements of an ecosystem – including people, plants, animals and their physical surroundings – are interconnected. It places human needs at the centre of biodiversity management. Ultimately, the ecosystem approach will help the countries of the region to collectively manage the marine resource on which their people and economies depend.

Three marine biologists from Comoros took part in the 28-day survey of the Comoros Gyre. They worked side-by-side with their scientific counterparts from Kenya, Madagascar, South Africa, Tanzania, France, Germany and Norway.

The Comoros Gyre is an anti-cyclonic eddy located between the north east coast of Mozambique and the north west coast of Madagascar. It is constantly in flux and is considered to be one of the most dynamic oceanographic features of the western Indian Ocean. The goal of the scientific research carried out in this area over the past 28-days was to investigate the physical and chemical characteristics of the area and assess the fisheries potential of small pelagic fish, such as scads, mackerels, herrings and sardines, in the Comoros Basin.

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For further information:

www.asclme.org

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