

Marine science in SA receives a major boost

International experts in marine science will gather in Cape Town to discuss collaboration opportunities at the German-South African Year of Science 2012/2013.

Co-hosted by the Applied Centre for Climate and Earth Systems Science (ACCESS) and the Leibniz Center for Tropical Marine Ecology (ZMT), representatives from ten South African universities and research agencies will meet with delegations from Germany, Norway and France from 3 to 6 December.

They will explore a range of opportunities for developing marine science and related research collaboration in the coastal and continental shelf domain over the coming decade.

Using SA resources

According to Dr Neville Sweijd, ACCESS acting director, South Africa's geographical location and natural marine resources confer an attractive opportunity to partner with international scientists who are keen to co-operate in existing efforts: "There is growing recognition and appreciation of the complexity and globally important physical and ecological dynamics of our coastal and oceanic environment. South African research institutions and the South African government have invested significant resources into our research programmes. The most recent acquisition of the RV Agulhas II is a prime example."

Dr Werner Ekau, the German counterpart from ZMT and co-convener noted that: "Germany has been involved in Marine Science research in southern Africa for several decades now, and the existing level of skill and expertise here, as well as the continuous need for skills development provide for a meaningful and productive engagement in South Africa. There is a lot to learn from working here, for all of us and a lot that the research can have impact on".

Outcomes for the workshop

Focusing on the South African west and east coast, the four-day workshop will hear presentations and discussions on the interaction of physical ocean characteristics such as sea temperature, currents and chemistry, how that affects the biological processes in the ocean - such as fisheries - and the impacts of climate change, pollution and over-fishing. One of the main outcomes of the workshop will be scientific project proposals and significant training and capacity building initiatives.

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