

COMMENT



The South African Navy's Project Hotel and Project Biro will go a long way in re-establishing a legacy of ship-building for the country. Unlike the Navy Frigates which were delivered a decade ago, the new-builds will be undertaken on home soil.

There seems to be a perceptible shift. In the nearly two decades that I have been watching the maritime industry I have never seen so much attention given to the oceans and their potential to drive economic development. From AU level down to industry level – we all seem to be shifting gear.

I am not saying we are moving at full throttle. On the contrary, there is still much that needs to be done. But the African Union's declaration of a Decade of Africa Seas and Oceans as well as the launch of the African Day of Seas and Oceans on July 25; the Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy 2050 and even Operation Phakisa in South Africa speaks to a far greater visibility for the oceans from a governmental perspective.

The lack of any noteworthy hype surrounding this maritime decade, however, is a little frustrating and the rather diminished schedule that constituted the launch in Ethiopia suggests that, with the call to include significant portions of the industry, government organisations and NGO's, an important opportunity may not have been optimised.

At the same time, one has to take cognizance of the fact that, while there is an imperative for governmental support and intervention in the sector, the need for the industry to push forward and take control of new opportunities while expanding the continent's involvement in the Blue Economy is key.

There has to be a balance between taking heed of the international industry's foothold that already exists; realising the knowledge and skills transfer that can take place and creating a platform for the launch of new African businesses. And everyone needs to stop paying lip service to blatant corruption – corruption that ultimately enriches a few companies and individuals at the expense of the continent's ability to nurture the wellbeing of its own citizens.

After the FIFA scandal it's clear that no sector and no culture is free from the tempting lure of ill-gained wealth. A goal to put corruption on the bench seems almost unrealistic if my discussions with industry are anything to go by. Most simply believe, and have adopted a degree of acceptance, that there is more going on behind the scenes of every major deal than we will ever know.

At a time when various sectors of South African maritime industry are gearing up to submit or await the awarding of tenders, I certainly hope that this is not the case. There are some exciting opportunities awaiting the industry from the South African navy in the form of Project Biro and Project Hotel – and the Department of Transport (DoT) recently called for proposals for a relook at the country's coastal salvage strategy. In addition the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) will be looking for a ship management company to run their vessels.

There is much to be excited about and so it is perhaps fitting that this year sees the return of the SAMSA Maritime Industry Awards to the South African calendar of events. We are urging companies and individuals to be generous in their recognition of peers and colleagues as they nominate in each of the award categories.

For more information on this, please visit the dedicated awards website at www.maritimeawards.co.za.

We are looking forward to receiving a high level of nominations in all of the categories.

Colleen Jacka, editor

EDITOR'S CHOICE

RECOMMENDED READS:

Read Claire Attwood's take on the large pelagic fishery and foreign fishing on page 10

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