

Port of Maputo on its way to world-class status

Complementary role emphasised

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BY Ed Richardson

The Port of Maputo is a catchment area for the "mineral-rich region of South Eastern Africa", according to Ron Herman, chief executive officer of the Maputo Port Development Company (MPDC). In addition, its position provides the shortest sailing time to India and China making the prospects for the port and Maputo bright.

MPDC, a company registered in Mozambique comprising an international group of foreign investors with Mozambican partners, was granted concession rights in 2003 by the Mozambique government.

And the new shareholders, says Herman, have brought fresh energy to the development of the port.

A French consulting company has been employed to develop a 50-year plan for the port.

This masterplan is due to be completed by the end of November. "We need a long-term plan because the port is developing so fast that we don't want to build and develop in the wrong place," he says.

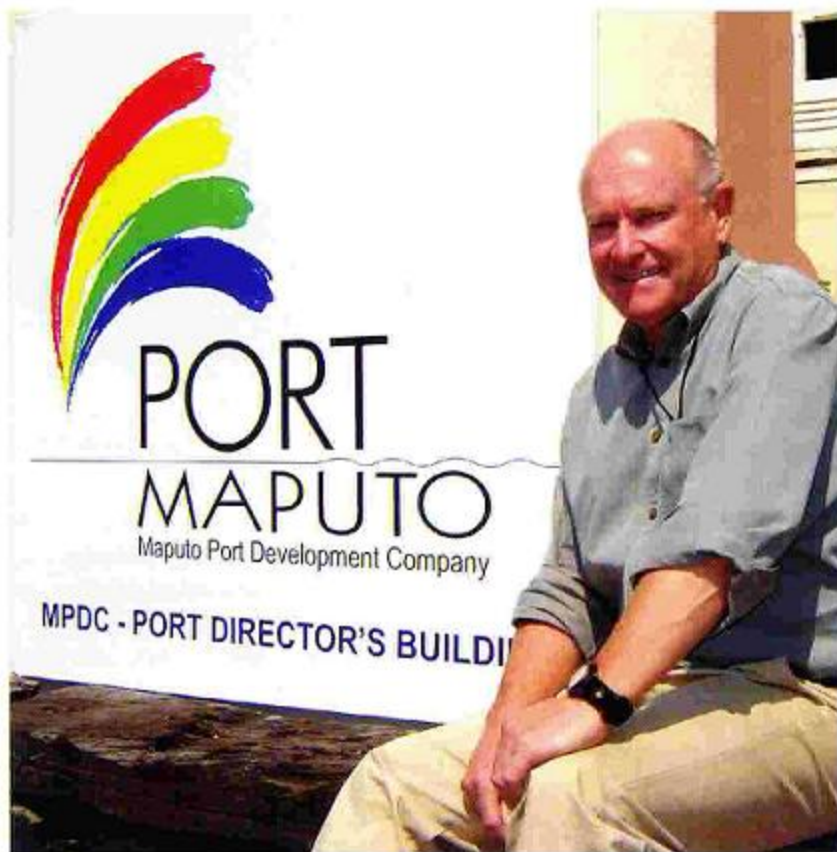
An essential part of the planning is undertaking a seismic survey of the channel to determine to what depth the port can go.

At present, it can handle vessels with a draft of up to 12 metres on a high tide. The long-term plan is to dredge from the present 9.4 metres below chart datum to 11.5 metres, and then 14 metres, according to Herman.

The planning includes surveying the approach channels, which pose a challenge due to the nature of the Bay of Maputo.

Herman believes that the new energy in the port is being noticed – both outside and inside the port.

"The intention of the Port of



Ron Herman, chief executive officer of the Maputo Port Development Company.

Maputo is to complement and not compete with the South African ports," he added.

"While there is a good vibe outside about the port, the other thing that is encouraging is that there is a good vibe inside the port.

"There is an excellent relationship between the concessionaires, CFM and the government. We have a good working relationship in the port, which is very positive," he says.

Supporting the positive mood is the investment in new equipment and the introduction of new handling methods.

Training and restructuring have seen productivity of ore climb from 140 tons per hour to 240 tons an hour. In the first half of the year, the

port handled 434 vessels, compared with 368 the previous year.

This has been achieved by examining the basics such as proper scheduling of shift changes and meal breaks.

"Running a port is not rocket science. One just needs to explain to the staff why they are here. It is a matter of train, explain and discipline," he says.

The discipline, in part, is the result of the implementation of modern management systems.

"We were the first port in Africa to be ISPS-certified," says Herman.

"And we have put in smart systems which allow us to go on-line with our customers.

"We are well on our way to being a world-class port," he says.