

Over E125m for Mpaka-Goba railway corridor

By Hlengwe Ndlovu

SWAZILAND railways has by far spent over E125m in the refurbishment of the Mpaka-Goba railway corridor.

Chief Executive Officer Gideon Mahlalela said the newly refurbished tracks have the capacity to retain a good condition for the next five decades. He said the company decided to invest on the refurbishment of this railway line after placing a careful consideration in the stimulated and frequent usage of this route. He said it was also envisaged that in the near future, more companies are set to use the Goba corridor as their preferred route in transporting goods to overseas markets via Maputo.

Meanwhile, Mahlalela said with the country contemplating on embarking on a fully fledged iron ore mining industry, it was likely that this route would now be loaded with traffic, hence the refurbishment exercise.

Meanwhile, the Southern African Railways Association (SARA) Chief Executive Officer Bernard Dzwanda praised both the Swaziland Railway and Mozambique Railway Chief Executive Officers for the role they had played in ensuring an efficient use of rail transport in Southern Africa. "The partnership in the two railway companies is pertinent in the development of other coun-



Mozambique ports and railways CEO Joaquim Zucule.

tries in the region. Mahlalela is also one of SARA's founding members and his passion in developing railways is very commendable," he said.

Dzwanda said the Goba corridor was the only railway which had managed to reach the benchmark expectations in the SADC region. "This is encouraging because railways

were historically made to support economies and they still offer the cheapest services," This is very important for export development, and the transportation of goods from Swaziland to Maputo is certainly expected to increase and improve," he said. Dzwamba also mentioned that Malawi had developed problems with its railway system and this had resulted in that country incurring over 55% of importation costs as a result of transport. He said if the country had a fully fledged railway industry, then these costs would have been significantly reduced because rail transport is very cost effective compared to road transport.

In another matter, the Mozambique High Commissioner to Swaziland said the abolishment of visa requirements between the two countries was the first step in reinforcing cooperation. Speaking during the train ride where the Swaziland Railway had invited stakeholders as a first step to exploring the opportunities provided by rail transport, he said he was boarding a train for the first time since 1978. This is because Mozambique's railways were destroyed during the civil war. "The refurbishment of the corridor and the commitment made by the two companies in restoring this route is a good step taken towards undertaking increased trade facilitation and certainly an increased use of railways," he said.

Substantial investment made in rehabilitating railway lines in Mozambique

MAPUTO corridor logistics initiative Chief Executive Officer Brenda Horne says a substantial investment has been made by the company and government in rehabilitating railway lines and seaports in Mozambique after the devastating civil war.

She said a budget of over 70m US dollars had been specifically dedicated to this rehabilitation programme, which will result in some ports in that country operating 24 hours.

In an interview, Horne said another 300m US dollars had also been set aside to stimulate a more robust growth, expansion and rehabilitation of core terminals, which will result in extensive expansion of sugar and container terminals.

Thorne however alluded to the fact that the upgrading exercise was rather costly, but stated that with increased trade facilitation, the company hopes to recover the funds invested in the development of these railways and ports.

"We can not deny the fact that we have spent a lot of money in rehabilitating our railways, and especially the Goba corridor and the only way we can manage to recover this money is through an increased traffic in the use of this route. But more importantly the rails were refurbished to ensure a more efficient and faster transportation of cargo to Maputo".

With these developments, Swaziland's production and export industry is expected to grow because of the efficiencies in the transit of goods via the Maputo port to the country's overseas mar-



Brenda Horne CEO of Maputo corridor logistics initiative.

kets. Horne also said the transportation of locally produced goods for export through Maputo is more viable, not only because of the reduced transport costs, but because of the improvement in efficiencies.

"Our company strives to offer effective and reliable services, and with the advent of regional integration, we want to ensure that there is more increased trade between

Swaziland, Mozambique and other countries in the SADC region," she said.

Meanwhile, she said there was a need to engage the public sector to ensure that transit of goods is more competitive.

The Chief Executive Officer of Mozambique ports and railways (CFM) Joaquim Zucule said the company had dedicated 23m US dollars in rehabilitating railways.



One of the CFM directors makes his remarks in Maputo.

He said apart from that, the Mozambique railway company had also set aside a budget to train its human resource, adding that to a large extent, employees were trained through expertise from the Swaziland Railway.

"After the war, it was important for us to learn from our Swazi counterparts how they had managed to grow their company. For us, such expertise is important in ensuring that sustainable growth is also

achieved by our company," he said. He said there was a drive by the company in partnering with cargo owners for more increased investments.

He also alluded to the fact that rail transport is one of the cheapest modes of transport, and that with the ever escalating fuel costs exporters were set to make meaningful savings if they chose to utilise trains as their preferred mode of transport.