

SA needs to speed up oceans economy for better job creation

By Daily News Reporter  Oct 15, 2019



Durban - South Africa needs to speed up the job creation potential of the oceans economy to reach the targets set out by Operation Phakisa in 2014, delegates attending the Forward Thinking for Maritime Education and Training Excellence conference at the Durban ICC were told.

The urgency of growing jobs through suitable skills development and entrepreneurial opportunities topped the agenda at the conference which started on Monday and is being hosted by the South African International Maritime Institute (SAIMI).

Industry captains meanwhile questioned the effectiveness of the workshop, given the track record of similar “talk shops” in the past.

In attendance was panelist Southern African Shipyards, a Durban based shipbuilding and ship-repair company, CEO Prasheen Maharaj.

“There needs to be a sincerer effort to have meaningful engagement between private sector and government as ultimately private sector will be the largest absorber of the skills base,” he said.

He recommended that there needs to be an equitable distribution from a regional level in respect of skills development in the maritime industry.

“We find a majority of the skills are developed in Western Cape and they cannot afford to migrate to KZN where the skills are desperately required,” he said.

Maharaj was however encouraged by the remarks made by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation: Head of Operation Phakisa, Mpumzi Bonga.

Bonga said while in the past five years the maritime economy significantly raised its contribution to GDP to R41.1-billion in investments, just less than 10 000 jobs were created. In line with the 2033 targets set by Operation Phakisa, jobs growth by now should have been 77 000 and the contribution to GDP should have been R32-billion.

“We have surpassed the GDP contribution target, but we have not created the desired number of direct jobs – even taking indirect jobs into account, we have not met our target. We need to sober up as we plan for the skills development we need to grow the oceans economy,” said Bonga.

He encouraged roleplayers in all six of the key sectors of Operation Phakisa to change their attitude to “business unusual” to grow the oceans economy in a speedy manner. This can be achieved through collaboration with the private sector to plan together as a nation, and investing in critical human capital for greater growth and success, he said.

“We do not have the luxury of time since our biggest shareholder, South Africans, are becoming impatient. There is no room for mistakes as South Africans need skills to change their material conditions,” said Bonga.

Operation Phakisa (meaning ‘hurry up’ in Sesotho) was launched in 2014, drawing from the concept of Malaysia's Big Fast Results Methodology. It is a results-driven multi-sector approach to growing the blue economy - with a target to create 1 million jobs and contribute up to R177-billion to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2033.

SAIMI Advisory Board chair Prof Sibongile Muthwa said the intention of the conference was to advance maritime skills development in South Africa by seeking input from delegates on their challenges in training sufficient artisans, identifying blockages and building maritime skills capacity. She also emphasised the importance of collaborative models inclusive of government role players.

Muthwa introduced the Oceans Economy Skills Development Assessment for South Africa study, which was conducted by SAIMI to determine the capacity of education and training institutions to deliver the forecasted skills needed to support maritime economic growth.

Tomorrow is the third and final day of the conference.

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