

## **Patterns and Processes of the Ecosystems of the southern Mid-Atlantic Ridge**

### **SA-MAR ECO**

#### **Progress Report**

**29-30 September, 2007**

**Reykjavic, Iceland**

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1. The South Atlantic MAR-ECO originated from a workshop held in Balneário Camboriú, Brazil, in September 2006, when interim Steering Committee was formed. In January this committee submitted to the international MAR-ECO Steering Committee a draft proposal with justifications and main concepts of the South Atlantic phase.
2. In June 2007, the P.R. Sloan Foundation approved the MAR-ECO proposal for the 2007 – 2010 period, including the South Atlantic phase.
3. In April 2007 the SA MAR-ECO interim Steering Committee met in Florianópolis, Brazil, during the XII Latin American Marine Science Congress (XII COLACMAR), when the project was presented to Latin American marine scientists and members of Brazilian science funding agencies, fishery agencies, PETROBRAS and Navy.
4. SA MAR-ECO received support principally from Brazilian Navy who is interested in mineral exploration in the AREA. Also, working groups were created to develop formal field proposals in the themes: Demersal Nekton, Pelagic Nekton, Macrobenthos, Zooplankton, Microbiology, Bioprospection, Data Mining, Environment and Ships, Sampling Technology and Funding.
5. Between June and September the working groups have developed drafts for six field proposals for SA MAR-ECO. Most of them have addressed the lack of knowledge on deepwater biodiversity in the South Atlantic Ocean and SA MAR-ECO general biogeography questions. These proposals gathered 25 scientists from Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Chile. Efforts have been conducted in the direction of attracting scientists from Africa, mostly Namibia and South Africa. The SA MAR-ECO Steering Committee is planning a workshop to conclude the planning phase in early 2008. Montevideo, Uruguay, has been considered as an ideal place for this workshop, as a place to congregate scientists from Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina.
6. Collaboration from Brazilian Government agencies, including the Ministry of Science and Technology and Navy, was conditioned to the inclusion of the “high seas” in the 4-year “Plan for Marine Resources”. That was achieved through a series of meetings of the SA MAR ECO Steering Committee President and collaborators with members of Brazilian government. This was a first step that opened possibilities of funding and ship time from Brazilian science agencies and navy. The next step is a seminar to be promoted by Brazilian scientists involved in CoML programs, when these programs, including MAR-ECO, will be presented to

Brazilian authorities responsible for marine science funding programs. This seminar has been planned to occur in October or November 2007.

7. Brazilian navy vessels may not be suitable for most of the sampling work required by the working groups proposals. Lack of cables long enough for MAR operations is possibly their main limitation. On the other hand the recently acquired vessel ("Surveyor") seems promising although it will require some time until it is properly equipped for deepwater sampling.
8. Efforts on the South African Side have concentrated in SEAFO and the South African Department of Marine and Coastal Management. The SA MAR-ECO initiative is going to be presented at the SEAFO meeting in November, seeking support from this organization. The SADMCM has made available their vessels for research cruises principally in the Walvis Ridge area. However, this organization has suffered from cuts in their research funds and will need financial resources to collaborate with MAR-ECO.
9. PETROBRAS has been approached as a potential source of funding. Their main interest is within Brazilian EEZ where the company currently drills. However, the company has a large deepwater environmental program and it is possible to apply for financial support in the form of fuel and scholarships.
10. SEAP, Brazilian fishing agency, may be approached to provide funds specially linked to their high seas fishery development programs that aims at the Rio Grande Rise and the southern ocean in general (crabs, lobsters and toothfish).

**Summary:**

- The SA MAR-ECO is making progress in the direction of building a formal field proposal and raising funds for this proposal.
- The scientific community of South America has been committed to this proposal, but African scientists still have to be attracted.
- Funds for labs, museums, student support and possibly some cruise support can originate from Brazilian government and PETROBRAS provided that there is enough time for the proper arrangements. The field phase, however, is not likely to be completed entirely on South American and African resources. Vessels suited for deepwater sampling seems to be a major limitation.
- The mid-2009 deadline is another major problem, since most initiatives for raising funds and ship time may not advance fast enough.