Ports authority improves operations

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Parastatal authority the Maputo Port Development Company (MPDC) will undertake terminal capacity upgrades, present skills training programmes and acquire new operational equipment this year, communication and image manager Soraia Abdula tells Mining Weekly.

The MPDC is a partnership comprising the Mozambique Ports & Railways Company, or CFM, and Portus Indico, a company which comprises Dubai-based DP World and South Africa-based logistics group Grindrod and investment company Mozambique Getores, which collectively operate and govern the Port of Maputo.

The ports, located in the south of the Mozambique Channel, in the south-west Indian Ocean, include the Maputo cargo terminal, which handles bulk mined cargo, such as coal, magnetite, iron-ore, nickel and vermiculite, as well as bulk farmed cargo, including sugar, grain and molasses, and the Matola coal terminal, which handles coal and magnetite.

“The Maputo cargo terminal has a yearly throughput of about 12.2-million tons of bulk mined cargo. Bulk mineral cargo represents 69% of the Maputo cargo terminal’s total throughput each year and accounts for 58% of the Maputo port’s yearly income,” says MPDC commercial director Johann Botha.

He adds that the additional berth and storage capacity upgrades and the acquisition of new mobile ship loaders over the next three years will double the Maputo main port’s capacity from 10-million to 20-million tons a year.

This forms part of the MPDC’s 2030 master plan, which envisions a gradual expansion of the port’s capacity to keep up with demand and guarantee that the port has more capacity available than what is required by clients.

“The initial plan was to increase port capacity to 50-million tons by 2030, but the master plan has been updated as a...
result of major changes in business demand,” says Botha.

The most significant changes to the port will take place in the next two to five years and, followed by a phased investment to achieve a capacity of 50-million tons by 2020.

The Port of Maputo not only exports 90% of Mozambique’s commodities to countries such as China, India, Japan, Europe and the US, but also services cargo from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Zambia.

Meanwhile, MPDC human resources director João Cuna says the increase in volumes at the Port of Maputo, together with the closure of the Port School in 2002, demands a bigger investment and commitment in the area of training.

The hiring and training of 44 people to integrate port jobs are part of the MPDC’s human resources plan, which aims, ultimately, to employ more staff to meet the growing demand and deal with the potential staff deficit as a result of the current ageing staff complement and the movement of staff to mining projects in the north of Mozambique.

Current and former (retired) staff of the MPDC had already trained 12 crane operators and 16 winchmen by March.

The newly trained staff can now operate in the Port of Maputo.

The MPDC also trained a group of more than 48 operators, winchmen and telly clerks in April, while 16 telly clerks were trained in May.

“These training initiatives were embarked on to guarantee the availability of an internal workforce, while tackling the potential challenges that the boom of the mining industry in the northern part of the country presents to the MPDC,” explains Cuna.

The National Institute of Employment and Vocational Training, or the INEFP, which currently certifies and recertifies some of the MPDC’s technical staff, is also involved in the port staff training plan.

In light of the INEFP’s strategic plan, which also includes on-the-job training, the institute intends to introduce new courses, such as logistics training, which will deal with some challenges at the Port of Maputo and those of other companies in the same business area.

Meanwhile, to meet growing demand and increase productivity at the port, the MPDC will also acquire new operation equipment, destined to arrive at the port over the next two years.

The MPDC acquired 12 new payloaders with a full maintenance contract, spare parts supply and a warranty extension through on- and off-highway equipment solutions provider Choice Diesel, which is also the Mozambique-based agent for equipment supplier Liebherr Africa.

Six of the 12 Liebherr payloaders ordered last year have been delivered to the Port of Maputo. The fleet at the port includes forklifts, payloaders, tractor trailers, hoppers, grabs and mobile cranes.

The new equipment will reduce truck unloading time and improve vessel productivity (causing no disruption between the stocks and the ship) and inventory management, says Abdula.

“The loaders are our bread and butter,” says MPDC operations manager Gerhard Botha.

This is one of the largest investments in equipment replacement in the history of the MPDC, says Abdula.

An additional investment in strategic equipment is planned this year and includes the acquisition of grabs, back actors, conveyor belt systems, mobile ship loaders, container-loading systems and forklifts.