



Stephanie Le Bonniec with activist Mvuzo Mtombela protesting last week outside the offices of 135 Daisy Street in Johannesburg, where the banks of BRICS were created.

Oil drilling poses a danger

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Stephanie Le Bonniec (42) of Reunion Island recently attended the BRICS summit at the University of Johannesburg where she gave a presentation about the oil and gas exploration and the impact for marine ecosystems.

Sasol Africa and Eni Italian Oil Corporation reportedly intend to explore and drill for oil and gas along the South Coast, Richards Bay and Durban.

Stephanie, who has been staying in Margate, works for her non-profit organisation called Operations of Conservation and Education through Actions for Nature, Underwater Life and Mankind (Oceanum).

“Oceanum was born on November 11, 2017, when a group of passionate professionals decided to create an association with a purpose to protect and conserve the environment and, in particular, that of the littoral and marine ecosystems of the planet,” she said.

Amazingly, although not from

South Africa, Stephanie is raising awareness globally about South Africa through her study of the marine environment.

While in KwaZulu-Natal, Stephanie has been researching and conducting studies in partnership with organisations such as Groundwork, South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA), Aqua Planet, Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (Wessa), Cape Research and Diver Development and the SA Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds.

She is deeply concerned about the plans for oil and gas drilling off the coast of KwaZulu-Natal, and she emphasised that people should be concerned because the impacts can be extremely bad for both the marine and coastal environment (chemical pollution, acoustic and vibration pollution, atmospheric pollution, light pollution and solid and liquid waste of production, for example) and for the local economy (tourism, local fisheries and water sport).

Not to mention that our food chain can be damaged.

“There is also an increased impact on the climate, as there are lot of air emissions. Petrol offshore development can have direct and indirect impacts on marine biodiversity (fishes, crustaceans and cephalopods for example). The result is a reduction of population of superior marine organisms,” she said.

Unfortunately, Stephanie says tests have already started and impacts have been seen already, with a lot of marine animals dying on the beach.

She pointed out that these oil drilling plants are not defined yet but it could be in the northern drilling area with a main hole about 62km south east of Richards Bay (in water depths ranging between 1 500m and 2 100m) or in the southern drilling area about 145km east north-east of Port Shepstone (in a water depth of around 3 000m).

For the public, Stephanie suggests that the best way to oppose this is to stay informed and join and support organisations like SDCEA and Groundwork in Durban.