

# Oil spill: Fishing <sup>C Times</sup> is banned <sup>24/4/92</sup>

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MAPUTO. — The Mozambican government has banned all fishing in the bay of Maputo until further notice because of the potential health hazard posed by oil-contaminated fish.

The ban — which has severe implications for thousands of fishermen and the population of the entire southern province — was announced yesterday by Health Minister Mr Leonardo Simao.

The ban was prompted by the spillage of hundreds of tons of heavy fuel oil by the holed Greek tanker Katina P before it was towed to its present position about 80 sea miles off Maputo.

Fish were still on sale in the markets late yesterday, with anxious merchants desperate to convince customers that their fish were not contaminated.

The Monitoring Group on Katina P — an environmentally-conscious community group — said in a statement last night: "The seriousness of this disaster can only be measured if you take into account that 40% of the total exports of this country depend on the sea.

## Compensation

"We also have a serious drought, so people have become more dependent on marine resources."

Representatives of 7 000 local fishermen held a press conference late yesterday to urge the government to seek compensation from those responsible for the spillage.

Early yesterday municipal employees began removing oil clots from Maputo's tourist beaches.

Mr Benny Bennett of the British-based Oil Spill Service Centre, which is responsible for the clean-up, said although equipment had arrived to skim oil from the sea, officials were likely to wait until most of the oil had washed up, as this was the easiest approach to cleaning up.

Meanwhile, the tanker's rate of deterioration has slowed down. So long as she remains in one piece, transfer of her oil will go ahead, according to Pentow Marine's Captain Bob Liptrot.

The Katina P was holed when it hit a sand-bar 50km north-east of Maputo last Thursday.