

Ambassadorial-Level Meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission
Strengthening Peacebuilding and the Implementation of the Regional Maritime Security
Framework in the Gulf of Guinea

19 May 2023, 10:00 AM (US Eastern Time)

Concept Note

The Security Council, through its resolutions [S/RES/2018 \(2011\)](#) and [S/RES/2039 \(2012\)](#), expressed concern about the threat that piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea pose to international navigation, security and the economic development of States in the region, and encouraged the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) States to develop a regional anti-piracy strategy, in cooperation with the African Union. In June 2013, at the Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, facilitated by the then UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and UNOCA, Member States of ECOWAS, ECCAS and GGC adopted the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, the Heads of State Declaration and a Memorandum of Understanding between regional organizations to lay the basis for a common regional strategy to prevent and prosecute acts of piracy, armed robbery and illicit activities in the West and Central African maritime domain. These three instruments inspired the elaboration of the Yaoundé Architecture, which comprises the Interregional Coordination Centre (ICC), the coordination and information-sharing structure which connects the Regional Maritime Security Centre for Central Africa (CRESMAC) and the Regional Maritime Security Centre for West Africa (CRESMAO).

Ahead of the tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct in June 2023, significant progress and gains have been made to address maritime insecurity in the region, and the Gulf of Guinea States continue to demonstrate their commitment to the full operationalization of the Yaoundé Architecture. Indeed, since April 2021, there has been a steady decrease in instances of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the region as a result of the positive impact of piracy convictions in Nigeria and Togo in July 2021 and deterrent effects of increased naval patrols by the regional national navies, notably the Nigerian navy, coupled with improved cooperation between national, regional, and international counterparts. Furthermore, there has been significant progress in the gradual operationalization of the Yaoundé Architecture and in the strengthening of regional maritime law enforcement capabilities.

That said, maritime insecurity persists in the Gulf of Guinea. In late March 2023, for instance, a Liberian oil tanker came under attack by armed pirates off Pointe Noire, Republic of the Congo, during which six of 16 crew members were abducted. Meanwhile, a shift in the geographic locations of maritime insecurity from the ECOWAS waters to the ECCAS waters has also been noted, which may indicate that law enforcement and increased naval patrols have driven criminal groups to locations perceived as less patrolled or that organized criminal groups have been

engaging in other forms of maritime and riverine criminality, such as illegal oil bunkering and theft.

Additionally, the full operationalization of the Yaoundé Architecture remains hampered by operational, logistical and technical needs. The provisions of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct have yet to be translated into all respective national frameworks, while maritime security enforcement capabilities require further strengthening. In addition, operationalization remains constrained by a lack of clarity regarding the division of labor between the various regional structures, and the absence of predictable and sustainable financing. A multidimensional whole-of-society approach is also necessary to effectively address the underlying drivers of maritime insecurity in the region. As emphasized in the report of the Secretary-General of November 2022 (S/2022/818), the forthcoming tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct offers an opportunity for the signatories states, together with the relevant regional structures, such as ECCAS, ECOWAS and the GGC, to undertake a comprehensive review of the status of implementation of the Yaoundé Architecture to identify challenges, define the most optimal use of available resources, and outline a strategic vision for the next decade.

In [S/RES/2634 \(2022\)](#), the Security Council also stressed the need for a comprehensive response to prevent and suppress piracy and tackle its underlying causes as well as to create the conditions for durable eradication of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea. The resolution also emphasized the importance of the strengthening of democracy and state institutions, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and youth and women's inclusion for long-term peace and stability in the region. This was further emphasized in the report of the Secretary-General report of November 2022 ([S/2022/818](#)), as it underscored the importance of a multifaceted approach for tackling the problem of piracy and maritime crime in the Gulf of Guinea, highlighting the need to take into account the underlying social, economic and environmental challenges that underpin the recruitment of individuals into organized crime.

The call for the full operationalization of the Yaoundé Architecture has been further echoed by the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). The PBC has been increasingly concerned about maritime insecurity, including piracy, in the Gulf of Guinea, particularly its detrimental impact on peacebuilding and social cohesion in, across and beyond, the coastal and littoral states. The PBC has had a long-term engagement in the region, including in the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin, and the coastal countries of Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. On 30 June 2021, the PBC convened a meeting on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea to advance the implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, including the harmonization of coordination and response mechanisms to maritime insecurity and the mobilization of resources to address the drivers and root causes of piracy. The PBC also submitted advice to the Security Council in November 2022 on the Gulf of Guinea, calling for the revitalization of regional cooperation on maritime security and for the full operationalization of the maritime architecture set out by the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, including by the development of a clear roadmap and milestones to galvanize further support. The PBC called for adopting a context-specific, preventive, community-based, and whole-of-society approach to ensure an effective and sustainable response to piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, including through tangible initiatives that effectively address the root causes and

drivers of piracy and armed robbery at sea and to provide sufficient livelihoods to the affected communities in the region, particularly women and youth, to foster inclusive socio-economic development, social cohesion, and stability.

Noting that sex-disaggregated data on perpetrators and victims of piracy and armed robbery at sea, particularly within coastal communities in the Gulf of Guinea is scarce, the PBC further encouraged the adoption of a gender perspective in interventions to address piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, including collecting sex-disaggregated data and promoting women's roles in maritime initiatives and economic development within coastal communities. The PBC called for further measures to strengthen women's economic capacity, including through institutional, operational and policy reforms and expand their access to the financial system and modern technology. The PBC also underlined the need to urgently address youth unemployment and other social factors that leave at-risk-youth in the region more susceptible to piracy recruitment, riverine and other maritime crime, drug use, and gang violence, calling for the prioritization of youth inclusion and meaningful participation in the peacebuilding process in national strategies and plans, development programs, and youth-led community-based activities.

The UN in the Gulf of Guinea

UNOWAS and UNOCA have been jointly engaging with regional stakeholders such as ECOWAS, ECCAS and the GGC as well as external partners to identify and address the needs to ensure the full operationalization of the regional maritime security architecture. In this regard, UNOWAS and UNOCA, in close collaboration with the Interregional Coordination Centre, plan to implement a joint extra-budgetary project that assesses the Yaoundé Architecture and reviews the Yaoundé Code of Conduct.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), through its Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP), has actively provided various kinds of support to counter piracy and ensure maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. In terms of legal frameworks, UNODC GMCP has been supporting Gulf of Guinea States, namely Cabo Verde, Liberia, Nigeria and Senegal, Togo, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Gabon, and São Tomé and Príncipe in initiating and achieving legal reforms to prosecute and punish acts of piracy. At the regional level, GMCP provided technical support to ECOWAS in the development of the Supplementary Act on the Conditions of Transfer of Persons Suspected of Piracy and their Associated Property and/or Evidence and is currently supporting regional stakeholders with the drafting of a handover agreement on piracy for ECCAS region. GMCP has also deployed legal experts to support key institutions of the Yaoundé Maritime Security Architecture, and discussions are being held to support UNOWAS and UNOCA on the assessment of the implementation of the Yaoundé Architecture.

Under capacity building support for maritime law enforcement, GMCP continues to help strengthen operational capacities of the States through VBSS trainings and sea exercises with mock crime scene investigation to improve both the interdiction and evidence collection capacity. GMCP has also supported the first joint patrol of the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centres (MMCC) in Zones E&F, and currently, GMCP is providing technical and logistical support to facilitate a second joint patrol in the ECOWAS Zone G region.

Objective

In the lead up to the Tenth Anniversary of the adoption of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, the PBC Ambassadorial-level meeting on ‘Strengthening Peacebuilding and the Implementation of the Regional Maritime Security Framework in the Gulf of Guinea’ provides an opportunity to discuss the key achievements and remaining challenges of regional efforts in implementing the Framework. The meeting offers an opportunity to take stock and exchange lessons learned on the national, regional and multilateral efforts as well as to explore how the international community, particularly the PBC, can further support inter-regional efforts to fully operationalize the Yaoundé Architecture and address the root causes of maritime insecurity.

Guiding Questions

- What are the key successes in implementing the regional maritime security framework in the Gulf of Guinea and how can these successes be enhanced to advance peacebuilding?
- What are the main remaining challenges to the full operationalization of the regional maritime security framework in the Gulf of Guinea, and how can these challenges be addressed?
- What support do signatory states and regional organizations need from the UN system and the international community, including the PBC, to accelerate the full operationalization of the regional maritime security framework and support national, regional and inter-regional efforts to address root causes and advance peacebuilding?
- What community-based initiatives, mechanisms, and strategies are in place to address the root causes of maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea in support of building and sustaining peace, especially in the coastal communities? How can these be reinforced and/or replicated to further address maritime insecurity?

Agenda

Opening remarks by Chair of the PBC, H.E. Mr. Ivan Šimonović

- Briefings by:
 - Representative, Interregional Coordination Center (TBC)
 - Representative, the Gulf of Guinea Commission (TBC)
 - Ms. Delphine Schantz, Representative, United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) New York Office
 - Dr. Kamal-Deen Ali, Executive Director, Center for Maritime Law and Security Africa (CEMLAWS)
 - Dr. Ife Okafor-Yarwood, Lecturer in Sustainable Development, University of St. Andrews

- Interventions from the floor, including by Engr. Ugbede Williams Abuh, Assistant Director for Maritime Safety, Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) and Mr Nicolas Berlanga Martinez, EU Senior Coordinator for Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea.
- Reactions by the briefers
- Concluding remarks by Ms. Awa Dabo, Director and Deputy Head, UN Peacebuilding Support Office
- Closing remarks by PBC Chair, H.E. Mr. Ivan Šimonović