



ROYAL DANISH DEFENCE COLLEGE



Communique from the Maritime Dialogue Platform III

1. Background

On the 13th of January 2022, due to a general concern with maritime security threats in the Gulf of Guinea – especially piracy and armed robbery at sea – individuals from the maritime security community in the Gulf of Guinea met for a webinar. It was facilitated by the Centre for Stabilisation at the Royal Danish Defence College (RDDC) and the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre (MMCC) in Zone F, located in Accra, Ghana.

1.1. Participants

The participating individuals represented a broad range of institutions and international actors, including:

Industry: Maersk, MSC, CMA-CGM, PIL, BIMCO, Danish Shipping.

Actors in information-sharing: MDAT-GOG, GOGIN (YARIS), GOG-SHADE.

Maritime authorities: MMCC Zone F, MMCC Zone E, CRESMAO, ICC.

Non-regional navies: France, Italy, Denmark.

Others: The Royal Danish Defence College, Danish Institute for International Studies.

1.2. Scope

The webinar sought to **further improve the relationship between maritime stakeholders, including industry, regional authorities, information-sharing platforms, and non-regional navies. The seminar focused on two things: First, the interfaces on information sharing flow, and second the involvement of non-regional naval vessels in the Gulf of Guinea.** The dialogue platform enables participants to share experiences, concerns, ideas, and perceptions that can form mutual understanding, trust, and cooperation. The webinar is funded by and a part of the Danish Maritime Security Programme for the Gulf of Guinea.

1.3. The actors representing various information-sharing platforms

highlighted the progress in information sharing. The information-sharing capacity of the Yaoundé Architecture is steadily improving and helps secure seafarers when at sea, alongside the overlapping implementations by the developed mechanisms emanating from the SHADE forum as well as the development of maritime awareness software YARIS and SOLARTA.

1.4. The maritime industry

expressed their further concern about the safety at sea and the negative impact that piracy can have on maritime trade in the Gulf of Guinea. However, they also expressed their positive thoughts on the information-sharing mechanisms and implementations that are planned to increase the security in the Gulf of Guinea and highlighted the necessity of clear lines of communication and action during initial incidents response.

1.5. The maritime authorities

emphasised the collaboration, shared awareness, and de-confliction in the Gulf of Guinea as its main points towards a maritime environment free from incidents of piracy and armed robbery. The outcome of the work that has been done demonstrates the task and improvement of the different information-sharing systems.

1.6. International participants

communicated that dialogue is important for a strong partnership in the long run, along with full support regarding the Yaoundé Architecture and to support with a coordinated and broad scope.

2. Key findings on the relationship between the maritime industry, the local and regional authorities, and the international navies.

While there is consensus among the stakeholders on the need to act against piracy and for better security in the Gulf of Guinea, it is important to understand how the stakeholders work together (or how cooperation could be designed in the future) to enable cooperation. The webinar provided an opportunity to clarify the flow of information and elaborate on the relationship between actors. The section below elaborates on the key findings.

2.1. Numerous information-sharing systems

Sharing of information includes incident reporting, general information sharing, warnings to passing traffic, and crucially, the dissemination of information. Currently, a wide range of information sharing actors play a role in the Gulf of Guinea, including MDAT-GOG IMB, shipping companies, non-regional navies, and several more – this is not to mention the vast network of MOC and MMCC of the Yaoundé Architecture in which information sharing constitutes a critical (but not the only) component.

2.2. The overlapping information-sharing systems and mechanisms

The multiplicity of systems means that there is a degree of overlap. One point of discussion related to whether information should be fused into one system. This can reduce overlaps and inefficiencies and have the added benefit that information sharing procedures become clearer. On the other hand, having multiple systems means that systems can be designed to fit specific purposes, and contributes to the resiliency of systems that can draw from multiple sources. Multiple systems can also mean more confidence in secure information sharing. Finally, the topic of ownership was also considered at the seminar. Clarity on formal ownership and decision-making power with regards to the expansion of the user base of different systems is important.

2.3. Clarifying the flow of information

With so many actors engaged in or affected by maritime security activities under a host of different mandates, and with several information-sharing platforms existing, it is important to clarify the procedures for information sharing.

For instance, members of the maritime industry requested guidance on their initial point of contact during a security incident. It was highlighted that the course of action is ultimately the captain's responsibility but was appealed to follow the Best Management Practices for West Africa, which stipulate that the MDAT-GOG is the initial point of contact. Due to its numerous connections with local and international stakeholders and actors, the MDAT-GOG is an optimal point of entry to ensure that all actors are duly warned of an incoming emergency. Previous seminars have also highlighted the benefit of notifying the local or regional authorities (the MMCCs) directly if possible.

Another question related to what actors could gain access to what systems. Some actors have access to some systems, but not all. For example, while non-regional naval presence can contribute to maritime security by providing capacities that the Gulf of Guinea-state do not yet possess, their large-scale effect partly depends on their practical integration into the information-sharing networks, including YARIS, in the Gulf of Guinea and the Yaoundé Architecture itself. Another question relates to if and what systems the industry vessels have or should have access to. These questions are important, as they relate to the overarching topic of cooperation between the existing maritime security structures and information sharing mechanisms. While a very large number of actors are directly included, there are still outstanding questions with regards to the maritime industry and the non-regional naval participation.

2.4. Jurisdictional Issues

Capturing suspected pirates leads to jurisdictional issues if agreements have not been reached on how to hand over, handle and prosecute the suspects. There is a need for international agreements to address this concern.

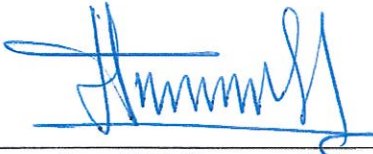
Non-regional navies are currently operating without the legal framework that could facilitate their action.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1.** Outstanding issues on information sharing systems should be resolved to create the best environment for information sharing. Therefore, actors must reach an agreement on the overall information sharing setup and figure out how the maritime industry and non-regional naval vessels fit in. This setup includes the number of platforms, their interaction, and specific purposes with regard to other actors.
- 3.2.** Other forms of maritime insecurity also merit attention. The information-sharing should continue to expand their focus to tackle insecurity in a holistic way – for example by incorporating measures on IUU fishing, smuggling, illegal bunkering, and other types of maritime crime.
- 3.3.** International navies can contribute to maritime security, but jurisdictional issues must be resolved. Furthermore, their integration into information-sharing networks should be clarified and strengthened to allow a more comprehensive and effective maritime security response.

4. Future Talks

- 4.1. There was a clear agreement that the dialogue and discussion itself was a deliverable that provides the foundation for identifying common ground. Mutual understanding is the first step in finding solutions together that work for all stakeholders. Equally important is the achievement of results, the key themes, and the recommendations above, therefore, constitute a point of departure for future action.
- 4.2. Stakeholders are recommended to consider the findings of the webinar and take steps together to move the relationship forward, especially those who do not come from the same field and implement recommended issues.
- 4.3. The organisers aim to continue the Maritime Dialogue Platform in person in the near future. The format and composition going forward will be adjusted according to lessons learned from this seminar and what make sense during a global pandemic.

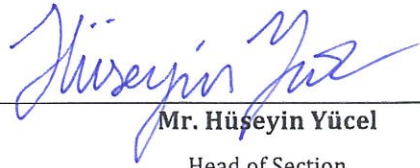


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