

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: FINAL COMMUNIQUE
ISSUED AT THE 2024 MARITIME SECURITY CONFERENCE ON THE
THEME:

'THE GULF OF GUINEA AND THE RED SEA AS A LEARNING CURVE
FOR AFRICAN DECISION-MAKERS IN CAPACITY BUILDING'

HELD IN STELLENBOSCH, SOUTH AFRICA
ON 5 AND 6 SEPTEMBER 2024



1. Introduction

The Third International Conference on Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG), held on September 5-6, 2024, in Stellenbosch, South Africa, was a collaborative endeavour by the Royal Danish Defence College (RDDC), Stellenbosch University's Security Institute for Governance and Leadership in Africa (SIGLA), and the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC).

The conference, funded by the Danish Peace and Stabilisation Fund and Stellenbosch University, convened maritime experts, authorities, and stakeholders to discuss maritime security in the GoG and draw lessons from the Red Sea region, Gulf of Guinea and Southern African waters. The event aimed to explore maritime security challenges, capacity-building strategies, and regional cooperation.

2. Conference Objectives

The conference pursued three primary objectives:

1. To highlight ongoing maritime security threats in the GoG.
2. To assess lessons from the Northwest Indian Ocean, particularly in light of the shifting threat landscape of the Red Sea since December 2023.
3. To provide a platform for stakeholders from the West, South, and East African coasts to exchange perspectives and strategies on maritime security and capacity-building.

3. Observations and Key Findings

3.1. Global Political and Security Context

- The current international political climate is marked by reduced multilateralism and increased great power rivalry, which hampers international cooperation on maritime security off Africa. This somewhat stifling environment presents both challenges and opportunities for African states to leverage geopolitical dynamics to their advantage.
- Ongoing global conflicts, such as those in Ukraine and Gaza, have economic repercussions affecting Africa, including disruptions in food imports, increased shipping risks, and higher costs associated with shipping and insurance. These issues could potentially extend instability to the GoG and also impact actors having to use the Cape Sea Route and its unpredictable weather and sea conditions.
- The use of advanced weaponry by Houthi militias in the Red Sea poses a risk of similar tactics being copied in and affecting the GoG, with possible involvement from Somali dissidents acting as intermediaries. This is a serious proliferation threat should it begin to spread.

3.2. Maritime Security Developments

- **Somalia:** While improvements in Somalia's political and judicial systems have been noted, piracy flare-ups remain a concern due to increased operational range and capability. The resurgence of piracy and the ongoing civil conflict, coupled with the rise of Islamic State-affiliated actors, complicates maritime security efforts and the Houthi attacks on shipping demonstrates how non-state actors rapidly disrupt

good order at sea in the Horn region.

- **Marine Resource Depletion:** Overfishing and pollution in the GoG are linked to increased maritime crime and migration of fishing communities. Ineffective law enforcement and pollution management exacerbate these issues, impacting income, job security, and environmental health.
- **Implementation Challenges:** The Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC) and the Yaoundé Code of Conduct (YCC) face implementation challenges due to insufficient investment, lack of political commitment, and inadequate national structures. Speakers emphasised the criticality of ongoing reforms to optimise the potential of these frameworks to help contain security threats.

3.3. Operational and Strategic Challenges

- Maritime security successes are often followed by complacency and reduced funding, leading to a recurrence of issues. The lapse of UN Security Council mandates and insufficient maritime security strategies highlight the need for renewed and robust approaches to contribute to better maritime security governance.
- Southern Africa's maritime zone is again in the spotlight given developments in the Northwest Indian Ocean. The region is notably underdeveloped in terms of security and strategic planning with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Standing Maritime Committee bearing the brunt of orchestrating the region's maritime security ways and means. South Africa's lack of progress with the much-acclaimed Operation Phakisa and the need for improved law enforcement and capacity-building were noted.
- Women's representation in maritime security decision-making is inadequate, necessitating increased participation and leadership roles for women as beneficiaries and agents of progress and change.

4. Key Insights

1. **Holistic Approach to Piracy:** Piracy in the GoG and Horn of Africa should be viewed as part of broader socio-economic issues, including onshore crime and employment cycles. A more integrated (interdepartmental and multilateral) approach is required to address these challenges effectively.
2. **Regional Cooperation for IUU Fishing:** Addressing illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing requires regional and inter-agency cooperation. Effective solutions must involve local fishing communities and extend to the knowledge and capacity of international bodies.
3. **Maritime Diplomacy:** African littoral governments must enhance their skills for and use

of maritime diplomacy, focusing on cooperation and persuasion rather than coercion due to limited naval capabilities and the dominant presence of non-traditional threats.

5. Recommendations

1. **Streamline Maritime Security Frameworks:** The YCC architecture should be simplified to improve affordability and implementation. National maritime operation centres should report directly to regional centres to enhance information-sharing and operational efficiency to shorten the flow of information and so enhance responses.
2. **Enhance Naval Involvement:** Navies need to develop comprehensive regional and national strategies, focusing on maritime domain awareness, interdiction, and cooperation. A mechanism for integrating external support in regional maritime security efforts should be established as cooperation is the key practice to employ limited naval means more efficiently.
3. **Address Complacency:** A proactive approach is essential to maintain funding, cooperation, and patrols, avoiding complacency that leads to recurring maritime issues. This requires a persistent vigilance about ways and means to mitigate maritime threats and vulnerabilities.
4. **Foster Partnerships:** Establishing mutually beneficial relationships between funders and African navies is crucial for naval building capacity and reducing costs. This goes for acquiring, maintaining and employing naval assets.
5. **Utilise Technology:** New technologies should be harnessed to improve maritime domain awareness and law enforcement, particularly regarding fishing.
6. **Research and Local Solutions:** Continuous research on pollution and its impacts is needed. Indigenous and cost-effective solutions should be promoted, involving local knowledge and community input in resource management.
7. **Improve Information Sharing:** Enhanced cooperation and information-sharing among fisheries authorities, navies, and regional organisations are necessary to combat IUU fishing and piracy effectively.
8. **Strengthen Southern African Cooperation:** Southern African states border two oceans and must collaborate more closely to address maritime crime and improve search and rescue capabilities. The Benguela Current Convention for example, can be leveraged to manage and protect marine resources more coherently in off the region's oft neglected Atlantic Coast.
9. **Promote Gender Inclusion:** Efforts should be made to increase women's representation in maritime security decision-making and leadership roles.

6. Conclusion

The 2024 Maritime Security Conference provided valuable insights into the complex maritime security landscape of the Gulf of Guinea and the Red Sea, as well as dynamics off the continent’s southern cone. Addressing the challenges identified requires a coordinated approach involving national strategic reforms, regional cooperation, and the active engagement of both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. Implementing the recommendations will be crucial for enhancing maritime security and capacity-building in Africa.

WHEREUPON, We the under listed, Professor at RDDC, Dean of the Faculty of Military Science, Stellenbosch University, and Director Faculty of Academic Affairs & Research at KAIPTC, append our signatures to this communique on the date below;

Issued in Stellenbosch on 7 September 2024.

SIGNED:



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PROF THOMAS MANDRUP

Associate Professor, Centre for Stabilisation, Royal Danish Defence College (RDDC)



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PROF SAMUEL TSHEHLA

Dean, Faculty of Military Science, Stellenbosch University



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MAJOR GEN. RICHARD ADDO-GYANE

Commandant, Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC)