



ROYAL DANISH DEFENCE COLLEGE



**FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ**  
**ISSUED AT THE MARITIME ACTION PLATFORM II ON THE THEMES:**

**‘NARCOTICS AND ARMED SMUGGLING, ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED, AND UNREGULATED FISHING AND IMPLICATIONS ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT, AND MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AS STAKEHOLDERS IN MARITIME SECURITY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR,’ HELD IN ALISA HOTEL, ACCRA, GHANA FROM 1<sup>ST</sup> - 3<sup>RD</sup> APRIL, 2025**



*Participants of MAP II, April 2025*



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### 1. Preamble

The second Maritime Action Platform (MAP II) seminar was convened by the Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre (MMCC) Zone F and the Centre for Stabilisation (CFS) at the Royal Danish Defence College (RDDC), from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2025 in Accra, Ghana.

The MAP seminars (2024 and 2025) follow in the tradition of the Maritime Dialogue Platforms (MDP) that were held from 2019 to 2023 to promote discussions between maritime stakeholders in national and regional governance, data and knowledge dissemination, the security sector, and the private sector towards deepening collaboration, cultivating a common understanding of the security situation in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) and building trust between the diverse actors within the GoG maritime space.

The overall objective of the MAP seminars is to serve as a high-level platform to discuss and enhance maritime security in Zone F and beyond through regional cooperation, as envisaged by the Yaoundé Architecture for Maritime Security and Safety (hereafter, Yaoundé Architecture). By including the political level, it is expected that these seminars will produce actionable recommendations that will be brought to the direct attention of policy-makers and, in turn, influence and contribute to policies on maritime security in the GoG region.

The specific objectives of the MAP II seminar were as follows:

- To exchange information and insights on emerging threats and trends in the GoG;
- To underscore the importance of the nexus between land and sea in the conceptualisation of maritime security; and
- To strengthen cooperation and trust between different stakeholders operating in the maritime space, who are critical to the safety and security of the GoG.

The Special Guest of Honour at the seminar was the Honourable Emelia Arthur, Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture of the Republic of Ghana. The seminar was honoured with the participation of 4 additional Members of Parliament of the Republic of Ghana. The seminar hosted a total of 80 delegates. The other distinguished delegates included the Defence Attaché of the Embassy of Denmark in Ghana; the Defence Attaché of the Embassy of Denmark in Nigeria; the Director of the MMCC Zone E; the representative of the Director of the MMCC Zone G; the former Director of the MMCC Zone F; the President of the National Fisheries Association of Ghana (NAFAG); and representatives of the ECOWAS Commission; the West Africa Regional Maritime Security Centre (CRESMAO); the Executive Director of the Fisheries Commission of



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Ghana; the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC); the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre (Narcotics) (MAOC (N)); multinational maritime monitoring centres in the GoG; government ministries, departments and agencies; the security sector; training centres of excellence; fisheries associations; the fishing industry; academic institutions; and civil society

The MAP II seminar was financed by the Danish Peace and Stabilisation Fund (PSF) under the Maritime Security Programme (MSP) for the Gulf of Guinea (2022-2026).

## 2. The Recommendations

### 2.1. Day 1: Narcotics and Armed Smuggling Recommendations

1. ECOWAS Member States should recognise the critical role of local communities, coastal communities and fisherfolk in the maintenance of maritime security and safety. National agencies responsible for maritime security should engage, sensitise and build the capacities of these groups to gain their collaboration in reporting illicit activities and thereby, their support to early warning systems on threats to maritime and the reduction of crimes at sea. The national agencies should also provide these groups with points of contacts for such reports.
2. ECOWAS Member States should strengthen the enforcement of fisheries laws and enhance Blue Economy technology.
3. The ECOWAS Commission should produce a standard legal framework or a model law on addressing present and future forms of trafficking to be adopted by all Member States by aligning their national legislation to the sub-regional standard.
  - a. In the meantime, maritime officials in neighbouring countries should be conversant with each other's maritime legal frameworks, prepare scenarios for possible cross-border investigations, and network with trusted contacts and partners, such as Seaport Cooperation Project (SEACOP) teams, to share maritime security and legal information to facilitate the interdiction and prosecution of cross-border maritime crimes.
  - b. ECOWAS Member States should also adopt laws similar to Nigeria's Suppression of Piracy and other Maritime Offences (SPOMO) Act, 2019 to aid the standardisation of national legislation in the sub-region.



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- c. All ECOWAS Member States should have provisions in their maritime laws against the disconnection of the Automatic Information Systems (AIS), in line with the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974, to foster interregional cooperation in the prosecution cross-border offenders.
  4. The ECOWAS Commission should provide a legal framework on the confiscation of assets of perpetrators gained from the proceeds of various trafficking offences.
    - a. National law enforcement agencies should investigate the linkage between organised crime and supposed clean companies and vessels, which may be used to carry out illicit activities at sea.
    - b. The ECOWAS Commission should provide clear guidelines on the management of confiscated assets used for trafficking activities towards funding programmes and actions to combat such crimes.
    - c. Stakeholders in countering trafficking, illicit financial flows, and other forms of organised crime in the ECOWAS sub-region, including civil society, should advocate for the draft instrument establishing an ECOWAS Counter Intelligence Investigative Bureau (CIIB) to be signed by Member States for there to be a joint investigative force to counter transnational organised crime in the sub-region.
    - d. Civil society in the ECOWAS sub-region should advocate for the passing of the supplementary act on narcotics trafficking and IUU fishing.
5. ECOWAS Member States and MMCCs should use Windward maritime tools in conjunction with other platforms, including free-to-use open source platforms, for intelligence gathering and monitoring of activities at sea, to be able to cross-check information provided by Windward's tools.
6. ECOWAS Member States should track Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) to be able to detect nefarious activities or intent of fishing vessels, which are sometimes used for trafficking purposes. These Member States would need to share their VMS information with the FCWC to enhance regional cooperation.
7. ECOWAS Member States should make use of the technical expertise, tools, intelligence, and investigative support available from international and regional institutions and networks in the global fight against narcotics trafficking.
  - a. Member States and sub-regional maritime monitoring centres should engage with MAOC (N) to acquire its support in intelligence and information sharing on illicit activities to and from the GoG maritime space, profiling vessels, obtaining lists and gaining access to available tools and open source technology, including satellite technology, and networking with similar institutions.





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- b. Member States and sub-regional maritime monitoring centres should engage the International Police Criminal Organization (INTERPOL) to use its border control systems to be able to detect international criminals, strengthen the law enforcement processes between source, transit, and destination countries, use its resources for profiling vessels in the GoG maritime domain, and in the future, utilise its blue notices pinpoint persons of interest in criminal investigations.
8. The ECOWAS Commission should develop a five-year strategy on trafficking; covering political, strategic, and operational levels and incorporating the provisions of the EIMS.
9. The capacities of members of parliamentary committees responsible for maritime security, fisheries management, and narcotics control in ECOWAS Member States should be built on the emerging trends, threats, and other issues associated with their work.
10. National agencies responsible for maritime security and narcotics control should build the capacity of their staff on the impacts of narcotics, psychotropics, and precursor chemicals on public health and safety, maritime legislation, information and intelligence gathering and processing, keeping sensitive information secret, and the protection of intelligence sources. They should also sensitise the public at large on the detrimental effects of illicit drugs to the human mind and body towards reducing demand and, in turn, supply.
11. National agencies responsible for maritime security should recruit adequate numbers of staff; particularly, monitoring centres that require 24-hour staffing.
12. The ECOWAS Commission and Member States should recognise the importance of regionally generated sustainable financing mechanisms to address crimes at sea, including all forms of trafficking.
  - a. Reliable and increased funding is needed for the MMCCs to effectively monitor activities at sea, gather information and intelligence, and purchase advanced technologies and assets for these purposes.
13. ECOWAS Member States should recognise that their political will is vital in combatting narcotics trafficking, including the enforcement of existing laws. National security agencies require assurances from their national governments and judicial systems of support and non-interference in their efforts in prosecuting perpetrators of offences at sea.
14. The financial penalties associated with infractions to these laws should be reviewed upwards to deter would-be perpetrators; bearing in mind the financial strength of narcotics traffickers.
15. ECOWAS Member States should combat corruption in agencies responsible for combating narcotics trafficking; by checking and not recruiting persons with criminal backgrounds, paying good salaries, promoting staff, commending positive results, building the staff



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- commitment via sensitisation on the effects of narcotics on society and avoiding regular staff rotation, establishing special teams within institutions to investigate corruption, having specialised judicial systems to deal with corruption at all levels, including the highest levels of governance, and punishing staff members who fall foul of their mandate.
16. Maritime monitoring centres from different regions should join forces to put pressure on Windward to improve its maritime monitoring and tracking tools to be able to detect when vessels switch off or manipulate their AIS.
    - a. Agencies responsible for maritime security should request vessels that switched off their AIS to provide justification for this action. They also should check the logs and equipment of these vessels for further evidence. These agencies should bear in mind the exemptions and procedures for disconnecting AISs provided for in the SOLAS. The ECOWAS Commission and Member States should harmonise the tools for tracking narcotics trafficking and fisheries in the GoG maritime domain.
  17. ECOWAS Member States should collaborate with the maritime authorities of other regions who only disassociate narcotics from vessels in the GoG maritime domain, to be able to prosecute the traffickers.

### **2.2. Day 2: IUU Fishing and Implications on Fisheries Management Recommendations**

1. ECOWAS should make the Yaoundé Code of Conduct a mandatory instrument as it covers the necessary provisions for tackling IUU fishing, facilitating regional information sharing and prosecution, and seizing illegal stock in this regard.
2. The Yaoundé Architecture should liaise with the African Union (AU) to include other maritime crimes to the AU's concept of a proposed combined maritime taskforce to address piracy. This could then allow for the eventual use of vessels provided under this AU initiative to counter other crimes in the GoG maritime space.
3. The ECOWAS Commission should urge Member States to standardize their legislation on IUU fishing. This legislation should have a clear definition of IUU fishing, reflect IUU fishing as a transnational organised crime, list the different types of offences under IUU fishing in order of gravity, provide sanctions that would dissuade engagement in this crime, and put forward pathways to ensure the legal finish for these crimes even in the face of the restrictions in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982.



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4. The ECOWAS Commission and other sub-regional fishing bodies should draft policies, a strategy, and an action plan to address IUU fishing at regional level to be domesticated at national level.
5. The FCWC should reinforce its work within its Member States, especially by providing accurate data on threats to fisheries, including information on suspicious vessels in the GoG maritime space.
6. ECOWAS Member States should sanction all categories of vessels engaged in IUU fishing not only the industrial trawlers.
7. Enforcement by ECOWAS Member States should target the beneficiaries of IUU fishing and their proceeds from this crime in addition to prevention mechanisms, and the revocation of fishing licences.
8. Maritime security and fisheries authorities in ECOWAS Member States should conduct At-Sea-Inspection to ensure that vessels are not using illegal gears to fish, as these vessels may show the correct gear during port inspection, and hide illegal gears on board the fishing vessels which are later deployed at the fishing grounds or the high seas. These authorities should also make their actions transparent in order to address corruption within the maritime space.
9. Fisheries authorities in ECOWAS Member States should take into account all actors in the fisheries value chain, including the hustlers, porters, descalers and so on, when proposing sustainable alternative livelihoods for coastal communities, and during fishing closed seasons.
10. Fisheries authorities in ECOWAS Member States should take a regional, holistic, and scientific approach to fisheries management, including in the adoption of or changes to laws and strategies. For instance, fisheries authorities in one coastal Member State cannot impose a closed fishing season for the regeneration of fish stocks without the cooperation of and coordination with other neighbouring Member States. Member States should recognise their shared maritime space and resources, for decisions in one Member State inadvertently affects the others.
11. In Ghana, the following interventions should be carried out:
  - a. Stakeholders working on ending the practice of IUU fishing and the conservation of fisheries, and establishment of the Blue Economy in Ghana should engage with Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture to rebuild this part of the country's economy.
  - b. The Government of Ghana should provide the necessary logistics to enhance patrols by the Fisheries Enforcement Unit (FEU) in the country's maritime space.



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### **2.3. Day 3: Members of Parliament as Stakeholders in Maritime Security and Good Governance in the Fisheries Sector Recommendations**

1. The ECOWAS Commission Member States should appreciate the fishing industry, and coastal communities as critical partners in the preservation of maritime security, and the realisation of effective fisheries management.
  - a. The ECOWAS Commission and Member States should sensitise, educate, engage, and consult members of the fishing industry, and coastal communities on the importance of fisheries management, and the detrimental economic, social, and physical effects of maritime crimes on their societies, and countries.
  - b. ECOWAS Member States should build the capacities of fishers, fisheries associations, and coastal communities, in detecting and reporting on maritime illegalities, and suspicious activities linked to the maritime domain. These Member States should provide a clear process for reporting, including through mobile applications.
  - c. ECOWAS Member States should consult the leadership of fisheries associations in the formulation, and implementation of legislation, policies, strategies, and plans that affect fisheries management, and maritime security. The leadership of these associations should engage their members thoroughly on the development and implementation of these instruments, and ensure that their members are constantly informed, and there is a constant exchange and flow of information between policy-makers on the one hand, and those in the fisheries value chain, and coastal communities on the other hand.
  - d. ECOWAS Member States and their maritime and fisheries authorities should consult with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on maritime issues, and in coastal communities to facilitate engagement with coastal communities, and gain access to intelligence on maritime related illegalities in these communities.
2. Members of Parliament in ECOWAS Member States should consider harmonising all laws related to the maritime space, including but not limited to, those related to fisheries, and security. They should also support regional cooperation in maritime security.
3. Members of Parliament in ECOWAS Member States should increase the budgets for defence and intelligence and in turn, defence and intelligence authorities should increase their budget allocations for maritime security.





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4. Stakeholders operating within the maritime domain should include Members of Parliament in deliberations on maritime security, and fisheries management as well as provide recommendations to bolster maritime security.
5. Members of Parliament in ECOWAS Member States, especially from coastal areas, should familiarise themselves with national instruments on maritime instruments, and strengthen national legal frameworks and policies through engagement with their coastal constituents to ensure a legal finish. They should enhance their interactions with their constituents in the coastal communities, and represent their constituents' concerns, perspectives, and needs on the parliamentary floor.
6. ECOWAS Member States should standardise their national fisheries legislation, and penalties. They should also collaborate in the surveillance and monitoring of fisheries, through and with their regional and national enforcement agencies, monitoring bodies, fisheries associations, coastal communities, and fishing industries.
7. The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AFCTA) Secretariat should lobby AU Member States to reduce or remove tariffs, excessive customs barriers, and other impediments to free and smooth trade on the continent. AU Member States should enforce anti-corruption laws to end corruption by border officials that is hampering free movement of goods, especially perishable goods, on the African continent.
8. ECOWAS Member States should consider establishing specialised maritime courts with legal professionals trained to adjudicate on maritime issues.
9. Fisheries management and maritime security authorities and enforcement agencies in ECOWAS Members states should share information from their various maritime monitoring tools in real time to enable inter-agency and regional collaboration towards averting and prosecuting maritime crimes. ECOWAS Member States should bolster the national maritime operation centres (MOC) to house representatives from different sectors of the maritime space, including the fisheries management and maritime security sectors, to foster information sharing, and greater collaboration, cooperation, and coordination among these sectors.



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### 3. Development of Communiqué

This Communiqué was developed from major points, conclusions, and recommendations put forward in speeches, presentations, and plenary discussions over the three days of the MAP II seminar.

The first day of the seminar was dedicated to ‘Narcotics and Armed Smuggling;’ specifically—

- Role of ECOWAS in Combatting the Smuggling of Arms and Narcotics at Sea – A Legal Perspective;
- Addressing the Challenges of Narcotics Smuggling by Sea – An Operational Perspective;
- Stakeholder Responses to Narcotics Smuggling – Perspectives of the Guinea Navy; and
- Global Initiatives at Tackling Narcotics Smuggling.

The second day of the seminar discussed ‘Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing and Implications on Fisheries Management’ with emphasis on the following:

- Regional Information Sharing in Combatting IUU Fishing – Prospects and Challenges;
- Impact of IUU Fishing on Livelihoods of Fishers and Coastal Communities;
- Regional Responses at Tackling IUU Fishing within the Framework of the Yaoundé Architecture and the ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Strategy (EIMS);
- Closed Fishing Season as a Fisheries Management Measure – Ghana’s Journey So Far; and
- Regional Closed Fishing Season – Prospects, Benefits, Impacts, and Challenges.

The third and final day of the seminar concentrated on ‘Members of Parliament as Stakeholders in Maritime Security and Good Governance in the Fisheries Sector’ with a focus on the following:

- Maritime Security: The Role of the Parliamentarian in Community Engagement;
- Preventing Cross-Border Maritime Crime: ECOWAS’ Commitment to Combat IUU Fishing in West Africa;
- Prospects and Challenges of Fisheries Co-Management: The Fisherman’s Perspective; and
- Post-Harvest Fisheries Management and Trade.



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WHEREUPON, We the under listed, Director of MMCC Zone F, and Head of Section of RDDC, append our signatures to this Communiqué on the date below:

Issued in Accra on 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2025.

SIGNED:

.....  
**CAPTAIN (N) DANIEL GNAMIEN EHU**  
Director, Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre (MMCC) Zone F

.....  
**MR. MIKKEL Ø. ANDERSEN**  
Head of Section, Royal Danish Defence College (RDDC)