



ROYAL DANISH DEFENCE COLLEGE

FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ
ISSUED AT THE MARITIME ACTION PLATFORM III ON THE THEMES:
‘SMALL ARMED SMUGGLING BY SEA, AND
ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED, AND UNREGULATED FISHING AND IMPLICATIONS
ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT,’
HELD IN ACCRA, GHANA ON 6TH AND 7TH MAY 2026





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1. Preamble

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) held the third Maritime Action Platform (MAP III) seminar on 6th and 7th May 2026 in Accra, Ghana. This was the final seminar convened under the Maritime Security Programme (MSP) for the Gulf of Guinea (2022-2026), which is funded by the Danish Peace and Stabilisation Fund (PSF).

The MAP seminars were preceded by the Maritime Dialogue Platforms (MDP) of 2019 to 2023, which provided a space for information exchange and discourse between maritime security actors and maritime industry stakeholders within the Gulf of Guinea (GoG). The aim of the MDPs was to facilitate increased cooperation, coordination, understanding, and trust between these stakeholders towards strengthening maritime security in the GoG. This was in recognition of the transnational and multisectoral challenge of criminality at sea, which cannot be addressed effectively by any single agency, country or region. The MAP seminars went a step further by providing a high-level forum for transferring knowledge, bolstering partnerships, and developing concrete and actionable recommendations to national and regional decision-makers, to enhance maritime safety and security in the GoG.

Therefore, the objectives of the MAP seminars were to:

- Share knowledge and raise awareness on evolving and emerging threats to maritime security in the GoG;
- Discuss the nexus between security on land and security at sea; and
- Build networks and foster deeper cooperation between multisectoral maritime actors in the GoG.

The MAP III seminar focused on small armed smuggling by sea, and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and implications on fisheries management.

The Guest of Honour at the seminar was the Honourable Ernest Brogya Genfi, the Deputy Minister for Defence of the Republic of Ghana who was represented by Rear Admiral Godwin Livinus Bessing, the Chief of the Naval Staff of the Republic of Ghana. The seminar was also extremely privileged to host His Excellency Ambassador Dr. Abdel-Fatau Musah, the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (C-PAPS) at the ECOWAS Commission.



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The other eminent delegates at the seminar included representatives of Service Chiefs and the Chief of Defence Intelligence of the Republic of Ghana; the Defence Attaché of the Royal Embassy of Denmark in Accra and Representative of the Royal Danish Ambassador to Ghana; representatives of the ECOWAS Commission; Members of Parliament of the Republic of Ghana; Heads and representatives of maritime authorities and agencies, national security institutions, and international and regional organisations; representatives of fisheries associations and the fishing industry; and representatives of academia and the media. A total of 97 delegates participated in the seminar.

2. The Recommendations

2.1. Day 1: Small Armed Smuggling by Sea Recommendations

1. National security agencies should enhance intelligence-sharing on threats to maritime security and coordinate actions to counter these threats at national, regional, and international levels.
2. National maritime security agencies should increase the number of their coordinated operations aimed at intercepting smuggled small arms at sea.
3. National security sector agencies should collaborate to find the provenance of vessels that smuggle small arms to the GoG, and focus intelligence gathering and surveillance on vessels from these countries, to intercept and deter illicit activities.
4. National security sector agencies should collaborate in identifying, analysing, and sharing intelligence on crews smuggling small arms and their funding sources and assets, and in developing strong cases for the seizure of assets funded by smuggling activities.
5. National security sector agencies in charge of air, land, and maritime security should increase intelligence-sharing with each other on the different transnational organised crimes, as these crimes are interlinked and can converge to threaten overall state security.
6. National and regional maritime and security sector agencies should collaborate to share financial resources in view of reduced donor support globally.
7. National and Zone F member states security sector agencies should develop security clearance policies to build trust for increased sharing of sensitive information across regions.
8. ECOWAS Commission should jointly develop and agree on fines or other sanctions for manufacturers and ports of departure of small arms smuggled at sea.
9. ECOWAS Commission should jointly consolidate all platforms and initiatives being developed across the continent to strengthen maritime security. They should develop a



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comprehensive roadmap of all these activities showing the lead country or institution, the partners, and the funding mechanisms.

10. ECOWAS Commission should jointly equip their MMCCs and maritime coordination centres (MCC) with adequate communication devices to receive distress calls from vessels inside and outside cellular connectivity zones.
11. ECOWAS Commission of Excellence should be engaged on training personnel.
12. National governments and law enforcement agencies should enhance their ownership of maritime security towards more prosecutions and sentencing of smugglers, and thereby serve as a deterrence to further small arms smuggling by sea.
13. National maritime agencies should ensure that crime scene management professionals are involved and that procedures are strictly followed when intercepting vessels smuggling small arms, to be able to provide concrete evidence for the prosecution of perpetrators.
14. National governments should invest in physical and electronic infrastructure and technology at national ports that will improve the detection of concealed small arms, by and across security agencies.
15. National governments should establish Joint Port Arms Control Units at national ports to strengthen collaboration and coordination between agencies in charge of maritime security and/or countering small arms proliferation.
16. National small arms commissions, national maritime security agencies, local fisherfolk, and local coastal communities should work together to detect and address the proliferation of small arms smuggling by sea.
17. National maritime security agencies should provide fisherfolk with a streamlined reporting mechanism such as a hotline or common platform, educate and sensitise fisherfolk and coastal communities on maritime security trends and threats, and provide remuneration and protection options for fisherfolk who report such incidents.
18. National governments should review and implement their cross-sectoral standard operating procedures (SoP) on maritime security to enhance information-sharing and reduce bureaucracy.
19. National security sector agencies should recognise all agencies that support the interception of smuggled small arms at sea in their reporting, towards deepening trust and partnerships.
20. National governments should leverage and expand their respective countries and security personnel's knowledge, capacities, resources, and indigenous innovations in new technologies—including unmanned systems and artificial intelligence (AI)—for enhanced and sustained maritime awareness, surveillance, detection, tracking, and real-time data on



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suspicious vessels and criminal and violent extremist activities, and for the protection of critical maritime infrastructure.

21. ECOWAS Commission and national parliaments should review their treaties, regulations, and rules of engagement to reflect the emergence of new technologies in the maritime security space.
22. ECOWAS Commission should systematically establish layered defence architecture to counter drone-enabled small arms smuggling in the GoG that will include drone-detection radars, electronic jammers, drone shields, and rules of interception. This would require regulatory reform at the regional level to harmonise regulations and their enforcement on the use of drones, and end-user certification and remote identification of unmanned systems; operational safeguards with the adequate equipment and resources; intelligence integration through dedicated unmanned systems desks and database, information-sharing across zones, and AI-enabled data fusion; and indigenous innovation through investments in building science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and robotics capabilities, academic-industry partnerships, regional centres of excellence to provide the needed training, and the manufacture of drones.
23. National governments, agencies, and civil society should enumerate their respective maritime security priorities and in light of these, negotiate with development partners on each party's priorities in this domain, towards developing and implementing a mutually beneficial development aid project.
24. National institutions should carry-out independent research and analyse their local maritime situations and threats to find solutions that fit their respective local contexts, instead of adopting Western or global solutions.
25. National authorities should enforce and apply maritime laws equally and consistently.
26. Maritime security agencies in the Republic of Ghana should set-up security checkpoints in different coastal communities, and sensitise and engage their Control Stations at Tema and Takoradi to be able to respond to distress calls from fisherfolk.

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

1. All stakeholders and actors in the maritime sector should operate with transparency in all their efforts, to curb IUU fishing.
2. The Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) should publish and disseminate their resources, regional SoPs, and information on their activities, widely.



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3. The FCWC should work with national governments to align national maritime legislation with that of international standards, and harmonise their monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) regulations at a regional level.
4. The FCWC should add an amendment to its tripartite regional Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to include the sharing of its Vessel Management System's (VMS) data with institutions of the Yaoundé Architecture, and formalise its relationship with the West Africa Regional Maritime Security Centre (CRESMAO), and the Central African Regional Maritime Safety Centre (CRESMAC).
5. National governments should prioritise the establishment of a local system that connects maritime scientific evidence to policy development and enforcement, for sustainable fisheries management, and effective maritime governance. This should be carried out through the setting-up of national ocean observation systems, the training of personnel on data collection and analysis, the regional processing and interpretation of data gathered before it is shared internationally, and the creation of a national workflow system that links scientific data and analyses with policy institutions, and maritime authorities and enforcement agencies. National information should be shared and coordinated by regional bodies like the FCWC and its West Africa Task Force (WATF).
6. National governments should engage their respective national specialised agencies on statistics in the generation of maritime data.
7. National governments/Member States should institutionalise and finance the WATF and operationalise the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC) Technical Roadmap.
8. National maritime agencies should cooperate with each other at regional level to stem the tide of IUU fishing through:
 - The harmonisation of general maritime regulations and punitive measures with strong enforcement that would render IUU fishing unprofitable, deter its enablers, identify and blacklist beneficial owners of vessels, confiscate assets, uphold the suspension of non-compliant vessels, institute specialised fisheries tribunals, and ensure that the EU holds its vessels flying under flags of convenience accountable for their actions in African waters;
 - The interoperability of data systems that deal with the registration, blacklisting, and tracking of vessels, the tracing of the provenance and destination of catch, and real-time maritime information; and
 - Joint MCS, capacity building, and financial sustainability mechanisms, and coordination of patrols planning.



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9. National maritime agencies should share their monitoring information, and integrate their MCS systems with that of the FCWC's, to facilitate regional information-sharing.
10. National maritime authorities and security sector agencies should harmonise their databases, and coordinate their operations with clear leads, roles, jurisdictions, and guidelines to improve MCS in the maritime space.
11. From Côte d'Ivoire's experience in maintaining good marine trade relations with the EU, the Government of the Republic of Ghana should maintain a close relationship with the EU to keep abreast of new EU policies, develop a robust national fisheries certification scheme, provide the necessary information on fisheries to the EU, and give credit to the EU where applicable.
12. Maritime authorities of the Republic of Ghana should collaborate and engage regularly with local fisherfolk, to enhance timely intelligence gathering and sharing. In this regard, national maritime authorities should:
 - Build the capacity of local fisherfolk on maritime regulations, threats to maritime security, and maritime protection procedures, and facilitate a study tour of best practices of artisanal fishers national leadership in countries like Senegal and Cameroon;
 - Equip fisherfolk with the necessary tools for their safety at sea, and for the security of seas such as the provision of transporters and life jackets. In addition the Ministry of Communication, Digital Technology and Innovations of the Republic of Ghana, through the Ghana Investment Fund for Electronic Communications (GIFEC), should furnish fisherfolk with handsets that provide coverage on the seas beyond the regular cellular networks;
 - Empower the office of the Chief Fisherman with legal backing, and with the establishment of this office as the main interface between fisherfolk of respective fishing communities and maritime law enforcement agencies; and
 - Establish reporting mechanisms in the four coastal regions for fisherfolks to share information on suspicious or nefarious maritime activities.
13. National maritime authorities of the Republic of Ghana should enforce the country's 12 nautical miles (nm) Inshore Exclusion Zone (IEZ), limit and immediately and permanently revoke the licenses of those who violate this regulation.
14. National maritime authorities of the Republic of Ghana should prosecute the beneficial owners of vessels involved in transshipment at sea.
15. National maritime authorities of the Republic of Ghana should publish and where possible, provide open access to their data.



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16. National maritime authorities of the Republic of Ghana should train citizen scientists at community level to collect data on landing sites and on fish stocks in the four coastal regions, in accordance with international standards, following the Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable (FAIR) Data Principle.
17. The fisheries industry in the Republic of Ghana should identify persons for training as sea captains for their capacities to be built by local academic institutions, to increase local ownership of vessels.
18. The fisheries industry in the Republic of Ghana should seek funding/loans from local banking institutions, such as the Ghana Export-Import (EXIM) Bank, to finance their activities.
19. The MAP seminar platform should create a Steering Committee or Working Group to facilitate the advocacy for and follow-up on the recommendations made at MAP III and report back on progress made at the next seminar. The MAP seminar platform can source funding for this Committee or Group from ECOWAS or development partners. This Committee or Group can be led by ECOWAS and have as part of its membership the President of the National Fisheries Association of Ghana (NAFAG), the West Africa Non-State Actors for Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (WANSAFA), the African Association of Fish Importers and Exporters (AFIEX), and trawlers associations, among others.

3. Development of Communiqué

This Communiqué was developed from recommendations made in presentations, workshops, and plenary discussions during the two days of the MAP III seminar.

The first day of the seminar focused on Small Armed Smuggling by Sea; particularly:

- Global Initiatives at Tackling Arms Smuggling in the GoG;
- Addressing the Challenges of Small Arms Smuggling by Sea - An Operational Perspective;
- Unmanned Maritime Systems in Countering Small Armed Smuggling at Sea; and
- Combatting Illicit Activity in Central Africa - Trends, Challenges, and Prospects.

The second day of the seminar concentrated on IUU Fishing and Implications on Fisheries Management; mainly:

- When Vessels Go Dark: How IUU Fishing Undermines Ocean Observation, Maritime Security,



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and Ocean Governance;

- Fishing Crimes: How the Billion Dollar Fishing Black Market Thrived in Ghana and West Africa;
- Addressing IUU Fishing in the GoG - A Case Study of Côte d'Ivoire;
- Fisheries Management Measure - Liberia's Journey So Far;
- Regional Responses at Tackling IUU Fishing within the Framework of the Yaoundé Architecture and the ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Strategy (EIMS); and
- A Practical Suggestion to Enhance Cooperation among Fishermen and Maritime Authorities.

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

Issued in Accra on 13th May 2026.

SIGNED:

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

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MR. MIKKEL Ø. ANDERSEN
Special Advisor, Royal Danish Defence College (RDDC)