

POSITION PAPER
for a
MULTILATERAL COOPERATION IN THE GULF OF GUINEA

- MARITIME ASPECTS -

Ministries of Defence of
Denmark - France - Portugal - Spain

The Gulf of Guinea is a strategic area subject to a variety of risks and threats: the equivalent of 300,000 barrels of crude oil is stolen each day. In 2014, 104 attacks on ships were recorded on the high seas and territorial waters, and 80 people were taken hostages. Additionally, illegal fishing generates an income loss for the countries in the region estimated at 3,500 million dollars each year. Finally, the Gulf of Guinea is a port of entry for drugs coming from South America on transit to Europe.

Maritime insecurity in the Gulf is a persistent challenge, not only to the countries in the region but also to European interests, our energy supplies lanes, as well as the preservation of fishing and environmental resources.

During the Summit of Gulf of Guinea Heads of State in Yaoundé on 24-25 June 2013, member states of the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) showed their determination to face these challenges through a common regional approach: the 'Code of Conduct Concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery Against Ships and Illicit Activity in West and Central Africa', in line with UN Security Council resolutions 2018 and 2039. More precisely, UNSC resolution 2018 (2011) stated that the States in the region have a leading role to play in securing the Gulf of Guinea, and UNSC resolution 2039 (2012) encouraged international partners to support them in this endeavour.

Many initiatives – bilateral, European and international – are providing support to the build-up of the interregional architecture for maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. However, a number of illegal activities are still being perpetrated at sea, mainly where bordering States cannot currently engage enough adequate maritime security capabilities.

Denmark, France, Portugal and Spain can rely on the guidance given in the European Union Maritime Security Strategy¹ and in the European Strategy for the Gulf of Guinea to improve existing initiatives in support of the Yaoundé Process and to cooperate to enhance maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.

Building on current mechanisms and on lessons learned from national, International and European initiatives², our four countries therefore wish to engage in reinforced multilateral cooperation between

¹ This initiative is fully in line with the European Union Maritime Security Strategy which expressed clearly as an objective to “promote coordination and the development of further synergies with and amongst Member States, including at regional level, and cooperation with regional and international partners and organisations.”

² The importance of coordination and exchange of information and the key role of dialogue and common understanding is already evidenced by national voluntary exchanges of information between navies and the private sector. In a very different political and strategic context, the importance of sharing maritime information was also highlighted during the maritime operations around the Horn of Africa and wider areas in the European operation EUNAVFOR Atalanta, the NATO Operation Ocean Shield and Coalition Maritime Forces Operations.

the Ministries of Defence³, taking into account existing capabilities and tools, in order to contribute to countering maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea.

Following the above, and considering their abilities, relying on existing mechanisms and without creating new capability needs, signatories decide to:

Promote concerted efforts aimed at generating conscience in the international community about the scale of the challenge and providing coordinated support to the construction of the interregional architecture for maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.

The principles of this initiative are promotion of dialogue, strengthening our bonds with the coastal states and regional organizations in a climate of mutual trust and respect for national and regional ownership.

To achieve this general objective, we agree to:

1) Improve maritime situational awareness in the Gulf of Guinea by creating a coordinated exchange mechanism between maritime operational centres, whilst supporting the ongoing construction of the maritime coordination architecture of the region.

Through a pragmatic approach intended to significantly improve maritime situational awareness, using existing tools and at optimised costs, an exchange mechanism between Maritime Operational Centres (MOCs) will be established. In full respect for privileged ties between states and national ship-owners, and maintaining the confidentiality of information, each cooperating naval structure will contribute to maritime security information in the Gulf of Guinea.

In the field of information sharing, a first enabler for confidence will be sponsoring and advising the structures created by ECCAS, ECOWAS and GGC so as to ensure the role of the ICC in Yaoundé and a structural symmetry between the architectures of ECCAS and ECOWAS.

2) Look for synergies between maritime military activities schedules in full respect with national planning decisions.

In full compliance with UNCLOS and with the concurrence of national and regional authorities, we intend to support their efforts in enhancing maritime situational awareness, in order to provide space for security while the regional architectural approach can begin to take effect.

Notably, by more systematic exchange of information on deployment schedules between our four countries, it will be possible to better coordinate and reduce presence gaps, thus contributing to maritime security, mainly by improving Maritime Situational Awareness, in the area. Synchronizing schedules will allow better area coverage while still taking into account national constraints, or optimisation of planned exercises. It does not imply for the signatories to plan to deploy military assets in the near future.

3) Offer common practical cooperation proposals to local maritime forces such as education, training and exercises.

We intend to improve our efficiency by looking for synergies between our activities. Our model of European partnership can be supported by common cooperation offers to local maritime forces to complement national offers, in domains such as education, training and exercises. And this cooperation may be opened to European Partners. Our main objective will be to strengthen the

³ The initiative of the four signatories follows the approach of the European Union Maritime Security Strategy and of the European Strategy for the Gulf of Guinea, but is not an EU-initiative.

capacities of the countries in the region while sponsoring their role in gradually guaranteeing their own maritime security.

Way Forward

Our Ministries of Defence will develop regular consultations, at political and military level, to establish concrete projects to implement these proposals.

Once the partnership has been consolidated between our countries, we will encourage additional European partners with interests in the Gulf of Guinea to participate. Association to this initiative can also take place through secondment liaison officers to ships deployed in the area.

This initiative, fully in line with the EU Maritime Security Strategy objectives, can be considered as a first implementation of its Action Plan in the Gulf of Guinea.