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FACT SHEET

EU Strategy on the Gulf of Guinea

The European Union adopted a Strategy on the Gulf of Guinea on 17 March 2014, taking an integrated approach linking security, governance and development challenges offshore and onshore, and drawing from the lessons learned in the Horn of Africa.

The strategy

Covering all coastal states from Senegal to Angola including the islands of Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe, the strategy focuses on four specific objectives:

1. Building a common understanding of the scale of the threat in the Gulf of Guinea and the need to address it among the countries in the region and the international community.
2. Helping governments of the region build robust institutions, maritime administrations and multiagency capabilities to ensure maritime awareness, security and the rule of law along the coast.
3. Supporting prosperous economies in this region in line with national and regional development strategies, to create employment and assist vulnerable communities to build resilience and resist criminal or violent activities.
4. Strengthening cooperation between the countries of the region and the regional organisations to enable them to take the necessary actions to mitigate the threats at sea and on land.

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The Council has invited the Commission in consultation with Member States, the region itself and key international partners, to develop an Action Plan to deliver the Strategy and to report back annually on its implementation. A Senior Coordinator for the Gulf of Guinea will be appointed by the High Representative to oversee this work.

The adoption of such strategy ahead of the EU-Africa Summit in April 2014 highlights the importance the EU attaches to close and comprehensive cooperation with its African partners.

Opportunities and challenges

Countries in the Gulf of Guinea region depend heavily on Europe as their primary export market. Maritime trade to and from the Gulf of Guinea is largely conducted by the EU. There is an average of 30 EU flagged or owned vessels at any one time in the Gulf of Guinea.

Challenges in the region include increasing piracy and armed robbery, sometimes with violence, widespread organised crime in the forms of trafficking and smuggling (drugs, people, arms), with related money-laundering, taking place at the interface between the porous land and sea borders. These are increasingly damaging to local communities as well as fuelling problems upstream in Europe. The flow of money from criminal activities into politics and corruption can also help undermine States. Moreover, the depletion of fisheries by illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) in the Gulf of Guinea presents some of the worst cases worldwide – costing coastal states around USD 350 million a year according to the World Bank. The value of drugs and contraband shipped from West Africa to Europe has been estimated at around USD 1.25 billion by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

In 2013, the International Maritime Bureau Piracy Reporting Centre showed that out of 234 incidents worldwide, 30 took place off the coast of Nigeria, including 2 hijackings, compared with 13 incidents including 2 hijackings off the coast of Somalia.

Background on African objectives

The strategy is designed to support the [Heads of State Summit in Yaoundé](#), in June 2013, of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC).

The Yaoundé Summit resulted in the:

- Adoption of the Yaoundé "[Code of Conduct](#) "Concerning the Prevention and Repression of Piracy¹, Armed Robbery against Ships, and Illegal Maritime Activities in West and Central Africa" which will be reviewed in 3 years. The code puts particular emphasis on information sharing and coordination and clear engagement by States to declare their exclusive economic zones and enforce their own laws, including on

fishing, piracy and armed robbery at sea, environmental protection, waste dumping and mineral resources including oil.

- Adoption of a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) on Maritime Safety and Security in West and Central Africa, signed by the ECCAS, ECOWAS and GGC Heads, setting out the establishment of an experts group to prepare a follow-up action plan for implementation of the Code of Conduct.
- The [Yaoundé Declaration](#) (joint communiqué) signed by all the Heads of State.

At the summit it was also decided to locate the Intra-regional Coordination Centre – the mechanism to oversee implementation- in Douala, Cameroon.

The Yaoundé Summit was the culmination of a process started in 2010 and including 2 UN Security Council resolutions on Piracy and Armed Robbery in the Gulf of Guinea. Both [UNSCR \(2011\)2018](#) and [UNSCR\(2012\)2039](#) focus on promoting the maintenance of peace and stability in the Gulf of Guinea and emphasise the importance of supporting partner countries and regional organisations, through providing training, advice, equipment and resources where appropriate, so that they can increasingly prevent or manage crises by themselves.

For further information:

[Foreign Affairs Council conclusions – 17 March 2014](#)
