EU Maritime Security Factsheet: The Gulf of Guinea

The Gulf of Guinea is a vast and diverse region stretching from Senegal to Angola, including approximately 6,000km of coastline. The Gulf of Guinea is an important geo-political choke point for shipping transporting oil extracted in the Niger delta, as well as goods to and from central and southern Africa. Piracy, armed robbery at sea, illegal fishing, smuggling and trafficking, pose a major threat to maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea and ultimately to the economic development of the entire region. The 2018 EU Maritime Security Strategy (EU MSS) Action Plan contributes to the implementation of the EU Global Strategy as well as the EU Gulf of Guinea Strategy and Action Plan. It includes, for the first time, a section dedicated to regions and sea-basins, including the Gulf of Guinea.

1. EU Maritime Security Policy

1.1 The Gulf of Guinea in the 2018 EU Maritime Security Action

The 2018 EU MSS Action Plan features a section with a regional focus, with a set of actions dedicated to the Gulf of Guinea.

It includes a call on the EU to continue supporting the implementation of the Gulf of Guinea Strategy and Action Plan, as well as national and regional efforts in the framework of the Yaoundé architecture, as seen in the map.

This action supports other regional and international initiatives, while ensuring coordination of EU projects in the region.
1.2 The EU Strategy for the Gulf of Guinea

In 2014, the EU adopted an EU Strategy for the Gulf of Guinea, in line with the objectives of the 'Yaoundé Process' – the intra-regional commitment between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) as well as the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) signed at the Yaoundé Heads of State Summit (June 2013) to tackle maritime crime in its widest sense.

The EU Action Plan 2015-2020 was consecutively launched to guide the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Gulf of Guinea. Through the Strategy and its accompanying Action Plan, the EU aims to support regional efforts to address the many challenges of maritime security and organised crime, as part of the EU's comprehensive approach to West and Central Africa.

As foreseen in the Action Plan, the EU promotes and develops regular contacts and exchanges with the countries and the regional organisations in particular, the Economic Community of West African
States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), as well as the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC), thus contributing to the development of regional maritime strategies.

2. Regional Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea

In terms of number of incidents in the Gulf of Guinea in 2017 alone, there were 81 attacks on ships, of which 42 were related to piracy and 39 were armed robberies, while 32 seafarers were kidnapped for ransom.

To mitigate the threats at sea as well as its onshore routes, cooperation between countries in the region and relevant regional organisations should be strengthened.

To this end, the EU maintains cooperation with regional organisations such as ECOWAS and ECCAS and works in partnership with key international partners, such as the UN Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) Global Maritime Crime Programme.

The G7++ Friends of the Gulf of Guinea (G7++ FOGG) plays an important role in advancing the maritime security agenda in the region, bringing together private actors, and public, regional and international stakeholders.

2.1. The Yaoundé Code of Conduct and Regional Information Sharing

In June 2013, the governments of countries in and around the Gulf of Guinea, representing the GGC, ECOWAS and ECCAS, signed the Code of Conduct concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships, and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa, also known as the "Yaoundé Code of Conduct".

Its objective is to promote regional maritime cooperation and a stable maritime environment that can contribute to regional prosperity. In accordance with the Code of Conduct, signatories created regional centres for information sharing and coordination, including Interregional Coordination Centre (ICC) in Yaoundé, Cameroon, the Regional Centre for Maritime Security of West Africa (CRESMAO) in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and the Regional Centre for Maritime Security of Central Africa (CRESMAC) in Pointe Noire, Congo.

3. What is the EU doing to promote Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea?

The EU is committed to the improvement of maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea and actively contributes to the development of local capacities of coastal states in the region. Hence, a set of Programmes and Projects focused on capacity building, funded through the instrument contributing to Security and Peace (IcSP) and the European Development Fund (EDF) are geared towards implementing the Strategy for the Gulf of Guinea and its rolling Action Plan.

3.1 EU Programmes and Projects in the Gulf of Guinea

Launched in December 2016, the Gulf of Guinea Inter-Regional Network (GoGIN), an IcSP-financed, € 9.3 million project aims to improve safety and maritime security in 19 countries of the region, mainly by supporting the establishment of a regional information sharing network and the implementation of the Yaoundé code of Conduct. Denmark is co-financing the project with a contribution of €1.8 million.

Critical Maritime Routes Monitoring, Support and Evaluation Mechanism (CRIMSON) is an overarching IcSP-financed €2 million project connecting and coordinating all components of the Critical Maritime Routes Programme currently implemented in the Gulf of Guinea and in the Indian
Ocean. It provides and ensures coordination and coherence, visibility and communications, monitoring and evaluation, policy analysis and expert recommendations for projects covered under this umbrella programme, including for the project GoGIN.

Starting in 2019, an €8.5 million project aiming at "Improving Port Security in West and Central Africa" will support partner countries in West and Central Africa in their capacity to adequately address increasing vulnerabilities related to port security through assistance to comply with the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) standards and through support to increase resilience and preparedness to crisis such as attacks or explosions. The pilot phase will focus on West and Central Africa.

The €6 million Seaport Cooperation Project (SEACOP) seeks to build capacities and strengthen cooperation against maritime illicit trafficking in countries and associated criminal networks on the trans-Atlantic cocaine route. The project aims to reinforce capacities in seaports by supporting the setup of Joint Maritime Control Units (JMCUs) in selected countries in West Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

CRIMJUST (2016-2020) is a project implemented by UNODC and also funded through the IcSP. It aims to enhance the capacities and integrity of criminal justice institutions for regional and inter-regional cooperation to tackle drug trafficking and transnational organised crime in West Africa, among other regions.

The €10 million Support Programme to the Maritime Security Strategy in Central Africa (PASSMAR), will support from 2018 to 2023 the region by reinforcing the institutional, legal and operational framework for cross-border maritime cooperation. It will be financed under the Regional Indicative Programme for Central Africa.

Finally, the €29 million Support to West Africa Integrated Maritime Security (SWAIMS) EDF-funded project aims to support the implementation of the ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Strategy and improve maritime security and safety in the Gulf of Guinea.

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