

Symposium on Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea  
4 June, 2019 – IMO Headquarters

The following is a brief recap of the main messages conveyed at the symposium, and a list of recommendations by the speakers that could contribute to reducing insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea.

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## Immediate Actions for Consideration

While the symposium addressed a broad spectrum of challenges to maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, the participants strongly felt that the focus should be on those actions that would bring about the greatest reduction in attacks within the shortest timeline. Based on the moderator's observations, the following areas could be considered for immediate action.

**Issue #1.** Despite concerted efforts, there is still no consensus across policy-makers that the level of attacks in the Gulf of Guinea is *unacceptable* and that the violence faced by seafarers is intolerable.

**Immediate Actions:**

- All stakeholders promote the message that piracy and kidnapping are not victimless crimes and should actively counter perceptions that these incidents are “within historic norms” or “the cost of doing business.”
- Maritime stakeholders agree on a common reporting framework that would provide a clear and unambiguous representation of security incidents in the Gulf of Guinea. These statistics should be available to members on the GISIS database.
- Work streams to complete the revision of MSC 1333 should be addressed with urgency.

**Issue #2.** There is a lack of a regional operational forum to maximize partnerships between regional agencies, deployed international forces and industry.

- The forum could be modeled on successful SHADE forums in the Med and Indian Oceans.
- The forum would require regional leadership (ICC) and support from the coastal states and agencies of the Yaoundé framework.
- The forum could be used to increase awareness of international deployments in the GoG and provide opportunities for engagement and exercise.

**Immediate Action**

- Discuss the possible creation of a “SHADE-like” mechanism at the G7++ meeting on 2 July.

**Issue #3.** There is no clear structure to coordinate regional and international responses.

**Immediate Actions**

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- Consider if international forces could receive pre-deployment guidance to help respond to incidents in coordination with regional navies (e.g. recent Spanish response to piracy).
- The “Response Awareness” aspects of the MDAT-GoG should be expanded to include interaction with deployed forces.
- Encourage higher industry VRA registration and incident reporting.

**Issue #4.** There is a lack of cooperation between the shipping industry and regional agencies.

**Immediate Actions**

- Discuss ways to increase trust between regional agencies and the shipping industry.
- Increase transparency between industry and regional states on security-related procedures.
- Develop deeper dialogue between industry and NIMASA and other Nigerian maritime agencies.

**Issue #5.** There are serious concerns regarding the legality and ethicality of contracted maritime security services in the Gulf of Guinea.

**Immediate Actions**

- Increase transparency on policies regarding models of contracted security in the Gulf of Guinea (and particularly Nigeria) to include:
  - Embarked security officers – particularly where uniformed law enforcement personnel are embarked.
  - Public/private partnerships that provide escort vessels and other services.
- Encourage traditional maritime law enforcement methods.

## Session One – Defining the Threat

Speakers: Bertrand Monnet, Branko Berlan, and a recently kidnapped seafarer

### Pirate Modes of Action (Based on Personal interaction and interviews with the pirates):

- There that there are around 10 pirate groups operating in the Niger Delta, with 10-15 in each group (200-250 total). These groups are able to operate up to 70 miles offshore and can stay at sea for up to 3 days.
- These pirate groups are motivated by perceptions of inequity in energy resource revenues, concern for feeding their families and a good amount of greed.
- These dangers are increased by heavy dependence on drugs and alcohol which leads to unpredictable behavior and elevated violence.
- Any ransom money gained from these attacks is often reinvested in weapons and equipment and buying cooperation with local authorities

### Effect on seafarers:

- While the attacks and associated hostage holdings are usually for shorter periods than those in other areas, the attacks have a deep impact on seafarers and the affects can last a lifetime.
- The consistently high number of attacks and the lack of any prosecutions causes extreme anxiety amongst those who must work there.
- Personal experience with attacks indicates that the attacks are well-organized and appear to be directed from shore.
- Many coastal communities appear to be supporting, or at least tolerating, the attacks as there are very few threats to the shore encampments of the pirates.

## Keynote Session

Speakers: Dr. Grahaeme Henderson, Dr. Dakuku Peterside

### **Dr. Henderson**

#### Main Messages:

- The high level of piracy and armed robbery attacks in the Gulf of Guinea is not acceptable. Yet it is happening every day and this is not business as usual. We need to take urgent action now.
- Industry is united in supporting an immediate and focused effort by the international community to eradicate these violent attacks against seafarers.
- As a shipping industry, we will play our part to the full, and look forward to working closely with international partners and regional agencies.
- This Symposium is not a talking shop, but the day that will be remembered as to when we worked together and took action.

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**Dr. Peterside**

Main Messages:

- The Gulf of Guinea occupies a strategic location in international seaborne trade and It holds a significant percentage of the world's total oil and gas reserves as well as rich deposits of natural resources.
- There is a direct relationship between safe maritime trade and economic growth.
- Unemployment, poverty, inadequate legislation, weak law enforcement capacity and poor policy implementation escalate incidents of insecurity in GoG Area.
- While the region is stepping up enforcement, there have still been no successful prosecutions in the region.
- Majority of attacks in Gulf of Guinea occur off Nigeria and are carried out by Nigerian pirates operating from Nigeria, however, the pirate masterminds appear to be non-Nigerians.
- There is no option but for industry and the region to work together and we are looking forward to understanding how we can start this process immediately.
- Nigerian operational efforts are focused along two lines:
  - Cooperative Efforts (with regional and international partners): Working with neighboring states in joint patrols (Op Prosperity), Embarked Officers (Junction Rain), and Joint Exercises (NEMO, OBANGAME, CORYMBRE).
  - Nigerian interagency efforts are focused on the “Deep Blue Project” – which includes expanded navy, aviation and land assets and an advanced command and control centre.
- Following concerted efforts by the Nigerian Government, the ‘Suppression of Piracy and other Maritime Offences Bill’ which provides for a legal framework to fight piracy and create more conducive maritime environment has been passed by the law making body in Nigeria (The National Assembly).
- In answer to specific questions, Dr Peterside stated that he:
  - (1) would welcome IMO leadership on the issue of insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea
  - (2) perceives G7++ as “European Viewpoint”
  - (3) sees corruption as an enabler, but not the primary cause of piracy.
  - (4) would not necessarily welcome the formation of a Contact Group as this might duplicate regional cooperation.

**Session Two: Understanding the Challenges**

Speakers: Ifesinachi Okafor, Dr. Robert McCabe, Dr. Jessica Larsen

Coastal Community Opinions:

There are strong motivations for coastal communities to support (or tolerate) piracy that are derived from a mixture of: depleted fisheries (due to pollution and IUU fishing), ease of obtaining weapons, and lack of human security provisions.

Challenges to addressing piracy and armed robbery:

These challenges include a lack of legislation and legal harmonization and limited budgets. Additionally there are operational challenges such as a lack of coordination between different law enforcement agencies, domestic policies and strategies.

Other challenges identified that are hindering a quick solution include:

- Solving the lack of trust between the shipping industry and the region,
- A lack of formal requests for regional assistance (e.g. UN-based requests), and
- A lack of legal deterrent (no prosecutions).

### **Session Three – The Solution?**

Speakers: Cyrus Mody, Terry Gibson, Morgane Carre, Jakob Larsen, Derrick Attachie, Matthias Herter, and Dirk Siebels

This section featured speakers who have been directly involved with countering piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

Challenges recognized by the speakers:

- **Reporting.** Gaining a common understanding of the problem in the Gulf of Guinea is handicapped by ambiguity across reporting agencies of statistics, definitions and severity of crimes. There are also unclear lines of responsibility for reporting and response coordination for incidents in the Gulf of Guinea.
- **Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA).** Industry participation in MDA schemes through national and international reporting centres is still lagging behind other geographic regions. VRA participation by industry remains below 40% and incident and threat reporting is still shared across a variety of agencies without clear lines of responsibility.
- **Yaoundé Framework for Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea.** Speakers acknowledged that many parts of the reporting framework are still not operational – with challenges in obtaining necessary equipment and personnel, funding shortfalls, and interoperability across communication systems.
- **Lack of Regional Capability to Respond.** Even where coastal states may be extremely motivated to respond to incidences of piracy, many lack response capabilities. While some states appear to have modern equipment, it may not be able to cover territorial waters and further out into the EEZ.
- **Challenges with Privatized Security.** Nigeria has developed different forms of contracted security to include the provision of escort vessels in cooperation with the Nigerian Navy and MoUs that allow for Private Maritime Logistics Companies. However, there is considerable ambiguity regarding the legality of specific schemes and clear violations of policy have been observed where ships have embarked security forces as armed guards, or where contracted forces lack suitable vessels or weapons.
- **Piracy by Nigerian pirates account for the majority of problems in the region.** Concentrated law enforcement efforts in and off the Niger Delta will make a big difference, and will be catalyzed if supported by international navies.
- **Payment of Ransoms.** While the payment of ransoms should be kept as an option to free captured seafarers from captivity, there were concerns raised that the normalization of

ransom payments could eventually be seen as systematizing the process of kidnap and ransom in the Gulf of Guinea.

## **Menu of Specific Recommendations for Further Consideration (Based on Speaker Input)**

### Actions for Immediate Impact

**Reinforce the capacities of state authorities and Law Enforcement Agencies.** This could be done through programs such as the EU's GoGIN program, the US AMLEP program and exercise OBANGAME Express, French exercises such as NEMO and Corymbre and support for the Yaoundé architecture.

**Support increased regional and national information sharing in the Gulf of Guinea.** Encourage trust-building between international and regional centers, particularly in coordinating incident response.

**Expand G7++ participation.** The G7++ should be a platform for all regional actors and external partners to assemble through the principle of voluntariness but casting a much wider net than is currently the case.

**Focus on terminology.** In a renewed forum, a broadened set of relevant stakeholders will increase the sum of different understandings of what is the main threat, and what is even a transgression of law. For example, what is a crime to some states might be an administrative issue in another.

**Make G7++ discussions more practical, with implementable outcomes.** The G7++ should be a forum in which all stakeholders can communicate, coordinate and address technical issues of a legal, operational or other nature. However, the forum should have a plan on how to implement agreed objectives.

**Take a common stance on naval presence.** Many states are engaged in single state deployments already, and the EU has begun discussing the possibility of an operation in the Gulf of Guinea. Yet mandates, maritime strategies, threat perceptions, security needs and Blue Economy interests differ between naval states.

**Member states should commit to the implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct.** Several key components of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct are still lagging from those states who have committed to its implementation. Specific examples include:

- Lack of National Maritime Security Strategies by member states
- No establishment of National Maritime Security Committees
- No designation of National Focal Points

**Develop and implement a communication strategy.** The region should be actively engaged in messaging to both international and regional audiences regarding the damaging effects of piracy and the need for re-doubling efforts to reduce this threat.

**Regional countries should increase transparency of rules and regulations to enable legal maritime operations.** There are myriad schemes at work in the Gulf of Guinea to provide hired security through the provision of embarked guards, escort vessels, and secure anchorage protection, but there is considerable ambiguity regarding coastal state policies on their legality.

**International navies should be invited to undertake more frequent maritime security joint exercises and presence operations.** These should be tactically and spatially organized and coordinated in high risk zones at times of increased likelihood of attacks against shipping thereby increasing deterrence.

**Shipping industry (operators, charterers, insurers) should improve transparency and cooperation with law enforcement.** While much focus has been placed on increasing the transparency of regional agencies, some shipping companies have been accused by regional authorities of a lack of transparency regarding required reporting and security arrangements.

#### Longer Term Considerations

**Reinforce the Yaoundé Maritime Architecture.** Assist the region in reaching full operational capability for the CMCs of Zones (A, D, E, F, and G) for CRESMAC and CRESMAO and for the ICC.

**Make the Yaoundé Code of Conduct a binding document.** The document contains provisions for this consideration, and based on the lack of progress in critical areas, this could be considered.

**Support the resilience of coastal economies and communities.** In order to gain a sustainable solution to the issue of piracy and armed robbery, the international community should look to address negative perceptions which may be fueling insecurity.

**Rename the G7++.** If the forum seeks to be more inclusive nature to allow all relevant stakeholders a common platform to address issues at hand, the G7++ name is too narrow to properly reflect the group. This increased participation should not be at the expense of duplication of effort – so a broader look at the strategic dialogue should be considered.

**Acknowledge links between various security challenges in West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea in particular.** While the focus of this symposium was piracy and armed robbery, many other maritime crimes threaten security in the Gulf of Guinea. The organized criminal organizations and perpetrators are often able to easily operate across a spectrum of crimes – so focused suppression of one crime may cause a rise in another.

**Develop a long-term roadmap for relocation of the MDAT-GoG to the region.** While this may be a long-term project, the development of a roadmap could help focus regional efforts on a goal for assuming greater responsibility for MDA and reporting frameworks in the GoG.