

UNITED NATIONS OPEN-ENDED INFORMAL CONSULTATIVE PROCESS ON
OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA – MARITIME SECURITY

NEW YORK

23-27 JUNE 2008

**MARITIME SECURITY THREATS AND RESPONSES
IN THE WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICAN SUB-REGION/GULF OF GUINEA**

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SECRETARY-GENERAL

**Maritime Organisation of West and Central Africa
(MOWCA)**

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1. Introduction

Today, the World is faced with a grueling Maritime challenge: how to ensure the smooth, secure, unimpeded flow of maritime traffic through Sea lanes, Straits, Ports and Transit Corridors at competitive cost, while at the same time implementing provisions of the Law of the Sea Convention.

The key issue involved in the above challenge is Maritime Security; the provision of an effective surveillance, enforcement and Presence in the respective Coastal Waters and Exclusive Economic zones; Provision of a deterrence cover against increasing acts of Piracy, armed robbery against ships, illegal exploitation of marine resources including the massive illegal and Unreported fishing, oil theft, illegal migration, drug trafficking etc.

To achieve Maritime Security, various sub-regions of the World are involved in high level cooperation in order to achieve an effective awareness of their respective Maritime Domains. The sub-region of West and Central Africa which includes the oil rich Gulf of Guinea, is one such sub-region involved in high level cooperation in the quest for effective Maritime Domain or Situational Awareness.

This presentation focuses on the effort being made in the West and Central African sub-region/the Gulf of Guinea to translate years of consultations and

preparatory meetings into concrete actions that will improve, among others, the maritime safety and security profile of the sub-region.

2. The State of Maritime Security preparedness of the sub-region is summarised as follows:

- Surveillance in territorial waters, *provided by Naval Forces of Member States*
- Enforcement of Maritime code *by National Maritime Administrations*
- Presence in EEZ: *Very Limited*
- Search and Rescue: *Joint Patrols as in IMO Circular not possible as structures not in place, however the situation is projected to improve with the opening of Regional Maritime Rescue Coordinating Centres (MRCCs) in Monrovia, Liberia (Nov 2007) and Lagos, Nigeria (May, 2008)*
- Implementation of ISPS Code, *18 out of 20 Coastal member States of MOWCA compliant*
- Implementation of SUA Convention: *Very Limited*
- Port State Control: *Abuja MOU*

3. Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness

In real world operations, maritime domain awareness is assured by a partnership between the Navies, Coast guards and Maritime Administrations.

In the US, the Navy has achieved MDA for years at the tactical level but in order to achieve increased awareness, the Navy in partnership with the Coast Guard, and other agencies, has been developing the Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) initiative.

A basis for MDA is the installation of Automatic Identification System (AIS)

In West & Central Africa the multiplicity of regulations and implementation procedures on the coastline is not only costly to the individual States but also do

not allow the States to take full advantage of economies of scale in guarding the coast. It also creates barriers and obstacles to shipping and trade.

In the absence of a sub-regional agreement on the *right of hot-pursuit across national boundaries*, the sub-region lacks an effective means to pursue and interdict pirates and armed robbers involved in the act.

Through a Partnership with IMO, International and sub-regional Organisations and Development Partners, the West and Central African sub-region is rapidly moving towards achieving Maritime Domain Awareness by implementing the following key maritime safety, security projects:

- The implementation of the ISPS code, Abuja MOU on Port State Control of ships and the IMO Florence Resolutions on Search and Rescue for which Regional Maritime Rescue Coordinating Centres (MRCCs) have been opened in Monrovia (Nov 2007) and Lagos (May 2008).
- Seabasing, which involves the US-led off-shore positioning of a Maritime Security Training/Facilitation ship, the African Partnership Station, currently providing training to Maritime Security Personnel and facilitating MDA in the Gulf of Guinea.
- The establishment of the IMO/MOWCA Sub-regional Coastguard Network which was overwhelmingly approved by the IMO/MOWCA international Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, in October, 2006, and subsequently by MOWCA Bureau of Ministers and the African Union Ministerial Conferences held in Abuja and Algiers in February 2007 and April 2008 respectively.

The Sub-regional Coastguard network explores the Maritime Administration/Naval Partnership to provide a comprehensive sub-regional framework for an effective surveillance, enforcement and Presence in the Coastal Waters and Exclusive Economic zones; To provide a sub-regional framework for combating acts of Piracy, armed robbery against ships, illegal exploitation of marine resources including the massive illegal and Unreported fishing, oil theft, illegal migration, drug trafficking; facilitating the implementation of the UN Law of the Sea convention. To implement

the project, the long West and Central African coastline has been divided into 4 Coastguard zones with Coastguard Coordinating Centres in Dakar, Senegal; Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire; Lagos, Nigeria and Pointe Noire, Comgo; Principal Coastguard Coordinating Centres in Accra, Ghana and Luanda, Angola.

There is no emphasising the fact that the sub-region of West and Central Africa / the Gulf of Guinea has become one of the most sensitised of Maritime regions of the World.

As issues of Maritime Security are infinite, the above projects will position the sub-region to deal with current and future maritime safety and security threats. The General Assembly of Ministers of MOWCA is convening in Dakar, Senegal, 29-31 July 2008 to review, among others, the state of sub-regional maritime security threats and responses; and to adopt an MOU on the establishment of the IMO/MOWCA sub-regional Coast guard Network.