

EU Maritime Security Factsheet: The Gulf of Guinea

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FULL TEXT

BRUSSELS, 25 January 2021 / PRN Africa / -- The Gulf of Guinea is a vast and diverse region stretching from Senegal to Angola, covering approximately 6,000 km of coastline. It is an important shipping zone transporting oil and gas, as well as goods to and from central and southern Africa. On any one day there are around 1,500 fishing vessels, tankers, and cargo ships navigating its waters. Piracy, armed robbery at sea, kidnapping of seafarers, illegal fishing, smuggling and trafficking, and transnational organised crime pose a major threat to maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea and ultimately to the economic development of the entire region. The EU Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan as well as the EU Gulf of Guinea Strategy and Action Plan frame the EU's response to these challenges.

1. EU Maritime Security Policy

1.1. The EU Maritime Security Strategy and the Gulf of Guinea

The EU Maritime Security Strategy 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 (see Map).

1.2. The EU Strategy for the Gulf of Guinea

In 2014, the EU adopted an EU Strategy for the Gulf of Guinea to lend support to the objectives of the "Yaoundé Architecture" –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 in June 2013 to tackle maritime crime in its widest sense. The EU Gulf of Guinea Action Plan was subsequently launched to support the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Gulf of Guinea. Through the Strategy and Action Plan, the EU aims to support regional efforts to address the many challenges of maritime security and transnational organised crime as part of the EU's work with West and Central Africa.

As outlined in the Action Plan, the EU works to raise awareness and understanding of the maritime security threat, reinforce organisations working at the regional and national level, strengthen cooperation between national, regional, and international actors, and promote more prosperous and resilient coastal economies and communities.

2. Regional Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea

In 2020, according to the International Maritime Bureau, the Gulf of Guinea saw 84 attacks on ships, with 135 seafarers kidnaped for ransom. The Gulf of Guinea experienced a nearly 50 % increase in kidnapping for ransom between 2018 and 2019, and around 10 % increase between 2019 and 2020. The region now accounts for just over 95 % of all kidnappings for ransom at sea.

Strengthened cooperation between countries in the region and relevant regional organisations should help in reducing these threats at sea as well as its onshore sources. To this end, the EU works closely with coastal states, and maintains cooperation with regional organisations such as ECOWAS and ECCAS. It also works closely with key international organisations such as Interpol and UNODC's Global Maritime Crime Programme.

In addition, the G7++ Friends of the Gulf of Guinea (G7++ FOGG) plays an important role in advancing the maritime security agenda in the region by bringing together coastal states, private actors, and regional and international stakeholders in its efforts to promote greater international cooperation.

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, signed the “Code of Conduct concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships, and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa”, widely 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 set up regional centres for information sharing and coordination. These include the 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 improving maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea and actively contributing to the development of the capacity of coastal states in the region. A set of Programmes and Projects focused on the legal framework, operational rules, information sharing, and training and capacity building are all geared towards implementing the Gulf of Guinea Strategy and Action Plan. Funding comes from both the Instrument contributing to Security and Peace (IcSP) and the European Development Fund (EDF).

3.1. EU Programmes and Projects in the Gulf of Guinea

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

The Gulf of Guinea Inter-Regional Network (GoGIN), launched in December 2016, is a €9.3 million project which aims to improve safety and maritime security in 19 countries of the region, mainly by supporting training and the establishment of the Yaoundé Architecture Regional Information Sharing network - YARIS - which will help enhance maritime domain awareness. Denmark is co-financing the project with a contribution of €1.8 million. Support to West Africa Integrated Maritime Security (SWAIMS) which started in 2019 with €28 million aims to support the implementation of the ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Strategy and improve maritime security and safety in the Gulf of Guinea, with particular attention to improving law enforcement and governance frameworks, capacity and implementation.

Support Programme to the Maritime Security Strategy in Central Africa (PASSMAR), which was launched in 2019 will provide €10 million of support to the Central Africa region by reinforcing the institutional, legal and operational framework for cross-border maritime cooperation including with the private sector and civil society.

Improved regional fisheries governance in western Africa (PESCAO), which was launched in 2018 with a budget of €15 million aims to strengthen the regional approach to the sustainable use and management of fishery resources, including combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing). Overall management is with ECOWAS working closely with the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) and the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC), and involves support from the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA).

West and Central Africa Port Security (WeCAPS) which started in 2019, for €8.5 million aims to improve port security in targeted partner countries in West and Central Africa. It will address 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 in the case of crises such as attacks or explosions.

Improvement of Ports' Customs and Operations Efficiency in African ports (IPCOEA), started in 2019 with a budget of €1.88 million with the objective of improving the efficiency of customs, goods clearance, and administrative processes in the ports of the ECOWAS region through the implementation of a Single Window System, providing all

services in one space. At the moment the project covers Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Senegal, and Sierra Leone.

Seaport Cooperation Project (SEACOP), which started in 2015, for €6 million 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. A further SEACOP programme is being prepared for 2021-23.

Strengthening Criminal Investigation and criminal justice cooperation along drug trafficking routes (CRIMJUST), taking place from 2016, is a €12 million project implemented by UNODC which aims to enhance the capacities and integrity of criminal justice institutions for regional and interregional cooperation to tackle drug trafficking and transnational organised crime in West Africa, among other regions.

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