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'I/A' ITEM NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 2)/Council
Subject: Council Conclusions launching the pilot case of the Coordinated Maritime Presences concept in the Gulf of Guinea

1. On 15 January 2021, the Politico-Military Group (PMG) reached an agreement on the draft *Council Conclusions launching the pilot case of the Coordinated Maritime Presences concept in the Gulf of Guinea*.
2. On 19 January 2021, the Political and Security Committee (PSC) agreed the draft Council Conclusions, with a view to forwarding them to the Council for approval, via the Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER).
3. COREPER is therefore invited to approve the draft Council Conclusions as set out in the Annex and to submit them to the Council for approval.

**COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS LAUNCHING THE PILOT CASE OF THE
COORDINATED MARITIME PRESENCES CONCEPT IN THE GULF OF GUINEA**

1. The Council underlines the strategic importance of the Gulf of Guinea region and reaffirms its long-standing determination to support West and Central African States in their efforts to address the many challenges to maritime security, including organised crime.
2. In particular, the West and Central African States, which bear the primary responsibility for combating maritime crime in the region, made political commitments already in June 2013 in the “Code of Conduct concerning the repression of piracy, armed robbery against ships, and illicit maritime activity in West and Central Africa”. These commitments have been pivotal in the progressive establishment of the Yaoundé Architecture to improve coordination and cooperation on maritime security.
3. Nevertheless, the Gulf of Guinea continues to face a challenging environment in which piracy, armed robbery at sea, kidnapping of seafarers, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, smuggling and trafficking of drugs and arms, as well as transnational organised crime pose a major and increasing threat to maritime security, affecting freedom of navigation, thus endangering major trade routes, jeopardising the sustainable development of the entire region and the economic livelihood of the population, and leading to the deterioration of the environment and biodiversity.
4. In this context, the EU is committed to increasing work with the coastal States of the Gulf of Guinea and the organisations of the Yaoundé Architecture, through greater European operational engagement, including by ensuring continuity, reactivity, complementarity and synergy between Members States' actions in this strategic area, also having in mind cooperation with the maritime industry.

5. Recalling both the EU's Maritime Security Strategy and the related Action Plan, as well as the EU's Strategy on the Gulf of Guinea and its related Action Plan, following the Council Conclusions of 17 June 2020, the Council hereby launches the pilot case of the Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP) concept in the Gulf of Guinea. While being distinct from the CSDP missions and operations, the pilot case of this new EU initiative, reflecting the Union's growing role as a maritime security provider, can provide a substantial contribution to addressing the security challenges in the Gulf of Guinea.

In this regard, the pilot case of the CMP should allow the EU to:

- enhance the visibility of EU maritime presence and support the Union's strategic and political objectives, including conflict prevention, in close cooperation with international and regional partners;
- promote international cooperation at sea, in line with international law and UNCLOS in particular, and the exchange of information in the maritime security domain in specific areas;
- be used as a pragmatic maritime tool as part of the EU's Integrated Approach.

6. In this framework, the Council:

- establishes the Gulf of Guinea as a Maritime Area of Interest (MAI) and welcomes the establishment of the Maritime Area of Interest Coordination Cell (MAICC);
- recognises the importance for the Member States to further improve the coordination of actions carried out by their assets deployed in the MAI under national command, on a voluntary basis. The Council will ensure political control and provide strategic guidance on the implementation of the CMP pilot case;
- highlights the importance of enhancing the voluntary sharing of maritime security information among Member States and partners in the CMP pilot case if and when deemed appropriate to improve maritime domain awareness in the MAI;
- based on lessons learned from the implementation of the CMP concept, the Council will examine the possibility of applying this concept in other maritime areas of EU interest;
- will revert to the implementation of the pilot case of the CMP concept in the Gulf of Guinea by January 2022.

7. The Council looks forward to continued close cooperation with the West and Central African States, and the organisations of the Yaoundé Architecture in taking forward this work.

