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EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



Integrated Approach for Security and Peace Directorate (ISP)

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Concept Note for an Assistance Measure under the European Peace Facility to support military actors and navies of coastal states involved in maritime security operations in the Gulf of Guinea

1. INTRODUCTION

This Concept Note outlines a possible assistance measure benefitting the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) coastal states. In line with the PSC conclusions of 19 October 2021 on ‘Options for strengthening the EU’s Role in Maritime Security in complementarity with the Coordinated Maritime Presence (CMP) Pilot Case in the Gulf of Guinea’ this measure would complement the EU-initiated CMP in the sub-region by providing adequate support to strengthen the capacities of navies and military actors of some coastal states involved in maritime security operations. This would allow them to react effectively and efficiently to the insecurity in the GoG, in full compliance with International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The overarching objective of this assistance measure is to support African-led maritime security and anti-piracy activities conducted by military actors in the GoG as well as reduce security spill overs from the Lake Chad Basin, the Sahel and North Africa which should ultimately reduce the incidence, duration and intensity of violence and criminality, protect maritime vessels, coastal populations, and their livelihoods.

In line with the EU Integrated Approach, this Concept Note has been developed in the context of the Gulf of Guinea Strategy and its Action Plan, the EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) and its Action Plan, the pilot case of the CMP concept in the GoG. Following Council approval of this Concept Note, the High Representative will develop a proposal for a Council Decision on an assistance measure under the European Peace Facility.

2. BACKGROUND

Stretching from Senegal to Angola and covering approximately 6,000 km of coastline, the GoG an important geopolitical region and shipping zone. It is home to 4.5 percent of the world’s proven oil reserves (two-thirds of which are concentrated within the exclusive economic zone of Nigeria), of 70 percent of Africa’s oil production¹, and 2.7 percent of world’s proven natural gas reserves. Oil and gas transport, as well as goods to and from Central and Southern Africa transit through the region, with almost 2,000 vessels at sea at any given time.² The coastal area is rich in natural resources, which are crucial for both local employment and consumption in the region, and for trade with the European Union. However, with an unprecedented rise in illegal activities in recent years, the GoG has become one of the most dangerous maritime areas in the world. The threats that coastal states in the GoG are facing today are multifaceted and transnational. Collectively, they put at risk the maritime security and stability in the GoG and ultimately the economic development of the entire region.

Piracy and armed robbery at sea, especially kidnap for ransom (KfR) of seafarers on-board international shipping vessels (including European citizens), has increased steadily over the past few years. In 2020 the region accounted for approximately 95 percent of all worldwide

¹ EEAS (2020). Proposal for an implementation plan for a pilot case of the Coordinated Maritime Presences concept in the Gulf of Guinea.

² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2021). [Pirates of the Niger Delta: Between brown and blue waters](#).

KfR at sea³, while in the first quarter 2021 it accounted for nearly half (43 per cent) of all reported piracy incidents in the world⁴.

Incidents in the GoG are particularly dangerous, with over 80 percent of attackers armed with guns, while the pirate groups' (PAGs) modus operandi have grown more and more sophisticated.⁵ Evidence shows that deep offshore piracy attacks in the GoG are the responsibility of four to six pirate groups based primarily in five specific Nigerian states of the Niger Delta⁶. By all accounts, piracy in the GoG is mainly an issue stemming from Nigeria. Moreover, while deep offshore piracy and KfR has immense impact across the region, it is still a relatively small industry, with revenues amounting to approximatively 4 million USD. As such, there is also big discrepancy between the activity of piracy and the international measures against it.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, also undertaken by foreign fishermen, comprises almost 40 percent of the region's catch.⁷ This poses a serious threat to fish stocks and to the fishing industry – a particularly important source of employment for women, with 60 percent of seafood being marketed by women in West Africa⁸ which in turn puts at risk not only local jobs and food security but also coastal ecosystems and biodiversity.

Transnational organised crime taking place in the interface between the porous land and sea borders in the GoG is also on the rise, especially the trafficking of human beings (mostly women and children⁹), narcotics, arms and counterfeit goods.¹⁰ Today, the GoG is a major transit point for transnational drug cartels from South America, with approximately 25 to 35 percent of all Andean cocaine consumed in Europe passing through West Africa.¹¹ Transnational organised crime can also provide armed groups with additional sources of revenue, as trafficking routes often overlap with areas of instability and crisis, including terrorism in the Sahel and northern Nigeria. Oil bunkering is another key problem that coastal states in the GoG are facing, costing them revenue and discouraging further investment.

The growing international concern about the rise in maritime insecurity in the GoG is reflected in the adoption of two major United Nations Security Council Resolutions within a space of only four months: 2018 (October 2011) and 2019 (February 2012), both calling for greater regional action in response to piracy and armed robbery at sea. In August 2021 the Security Council raised again the issue of the unprecedented levels of insecurity in GoG in the context of its statement on Grave Concern over Dire Situation in West Africa, Sahel, Gulf of Guinea¹² and on the Importance of Maritime Safety, Safeguarding Oceans for Legitimate

³ European External Action Service (2021). [EU Maritime Security Factsheet: The Gulf of Guinea](#).

⁴ [Gulf of Guinea remains world's piracy hotspot in 2021, according to IMB's latest figures - ICC - International Chamber of Commerce \(iccwbo.org\)](#)

⁵ International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)'s International Maritime Bureau (IMB) (2021). [Piracy and armed robbery against ships: Report for the period 1 January – 31 December 2020](#).

⁶ Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta, Akwa Ibom and Edo.

⁷ GSDRC (2015). [Fragility, Violence and Criminality in the Gulf of Guinea](#).

⁸ [Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in fisheries and aquaculture \(fao.org\)](#)

⁹ Okolie-Osemene, J. (2019). [A study on human trafficking for sexual exploitation within the Gulf of Guinea countries](#).

¹⁰ GSDRC (2015). [Fragility, Violence and Criminality in the Gulf of Guinea](#).

¹¹ Center for Strategic & International Studies (2021). [A Transatlantic Approach to Address Growing Maritime Insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea](#).

¹² <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14605.doc.htm>

Use¹³. In January 2022 the UN Security Council started discussions on its first resolution on the topic of maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea in a decade, at the urging of Ghana and Norway¹⁴.

In June 2013, member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) attended the Yaoundé Summit, showing their determination to face maritime security challenges through a common regional approach. The Summit resulted the signature by 25 Heads of State of 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” (YCoC). Its objective is to promote regional maritime cooperation and a stable maritime environment that can contribute to regional prosperity.

Given the common African and European economic, developmental, commercial and security interests in the GoG, the EU has made significant efforts to build on the regional momentum that was created at the Yaoundé Summit. The EU adopted a Strategy for the GoG in March 2014 and subsequently launched the EU GoG Action Plan in order to contribute to the sustainable development of West and Central African coastal states' economies by promoting the significance of a well-governed, safe and secure maritime sector. The European Commission launched a number of actions in support of maritime security and safety in the region and the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, especially the Gulf of Guinea Interregional Network (GOGIN, ongoing since 2016), the Support to West Africa Integrated Maritime Security programme (SWAIMS, since 2019) and the Support to Central Africa Maritime Security and Safety Strategy programme (PASSMAR, since 2019), that have been working on strengthening maritime governance, maritime domain awareness, legal framework and criminal justice capacities in the region. In June 2018, the Council endorsed the European Union Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) and revised Action Plan, reaffirming the EU's role as a global maritime security provider. EU has been equally active through G7++ FOGG¹⁵ created in 2013 to support the maritime security architecture developed under the YCoC.

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¹³ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14598.doc.htm>;
https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un_documents_type/security-council-presidential-statements/?ctype=Piracy&cbtype=piracy

¹⁴ Organized Crime Perpetuating Instability, Violence, Poverty across West Africa, Sahel, Executive Director Tells Security Council | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases

¹⁵ Friends of the Gulf of Guinea.

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6. NEXT STEPS

In line with the Guidelines for the preparatory and decision-making process for assistance measures under the European Peace Facility, the following recommendations are made:

- PSC agreement and submission of the Concept Note to the Council for approval, including a recommendation on the authorisation of the proposed preparatory measure.
- Preparation of an HR proposal for a Council Decision on the assistance measure based on the Concept Note approved by the Council and taking into account the results of the preparatory measure.