

## **Peacebuilding Commission**

### **Ambassadorial-level meeting on Strengthening Peacebuilding and the Implementation of the Regional Maritime Security Framework in the Gulf of Guinea**

**19 May 2023**

#### **Chair's Summary**

On 19 May 2023, the Peacebuilding Commission convened a meeting on Strengthening Peacebuilding and the Implementation of the Regional Maritime Security Framework in the Gulf of Guinea. The meeting focused on the key achievements and remaining challenges of regional efforts in implementing the Framework, exchanged lessons learned on the national, regional, and multilateral efforts and explored how the international community can further support inter-regional efforts to fully operationalize the Yaoundé Architecture and address the root causes of maritime insecurity. The briefers of the meeting included the Director of Administration and Regional Coordination of Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC), the Head of Information Sharing and Communications of the Interregional Coordination Center (ICC), the Officer-in-Charge of the Western Africa Division of DPPA-DPO, the New York Representative of the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Executive Director of the Center for Maritime Law and Security Africa (CEMLAWS) and Lecturer in Sustainable Development of the University of St. Andrews. The Commission commended the progress achieved since the adoption of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, while emphasizing the need for the full operationalization of the Yaoundé Architecture. The Commission called for comprehensive legal frameworks, greater enforcement of the rule of law and anti-corruption measures, and reiterated the importance of national, regional, and international partnerships and collaboration to strengthen maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.

1. On 19 May 2023, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), H.E. Mr. Ivan Šimonović convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting on Strengthening Peacebuilding and the Implementation of the Regional Maritime Security Framework in the Gulf of Guinea, which facilitated exchanges on the key achievements and remaining challenges of regional efforts in implementing the Framework, exchanged lessons learned on the national, regional, and multilateral efforts and explored how the international community can further support inter-regional efforts to fully operationalize the Yaoundé Architecture and address the root causes of maritime insecurity.
2. In his opening remarks, the Chair commended the Gulf of Guinea States for continued commitment to the full operationalization of the Yaoundé Architecture. He noted the steady decrease in instances of piracy and armed robbery at sea since April 2021, as a result of the positive impact of piracy convictions and increased naval patrols by the regional national navies. He acknowledged the PBC engagement as an opportunity to exchange lessons learned and discuss the root causes of maritime insecurity and explore how the international community can further support regional efforts to fully operationalize the Yaoundé Architecture.

3. **Colonel Bell Emmanuel, Head of Information Sharing and Communications of the Interregional Coordination Center (ICC)**, underlined the need for national legislation reforms, noting that the Gulf of Guinea States do not have sufficient legal instruments to address maritime insecurity in the region. He noted that the required structures are in place, but the lack of financial and human resources create an obstacle for the implementation of the Framework. In that regard, he encouraged the UN to continue advocating with the States of the Gulf of Guinea and regional organizations for sustained financing to facilitate the implementation of the Yaoundé Architecture. He clarified that ICC was appointed as coordinator for the evaluation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, which could be an opportunity to transform it to a legally binding document.
4. **Ms. Jacqueline Seck, Officer-in-Charge, Western Africa Division of DPPA-DPO**, reiterated the importance of addressing the root causes of piracy and the need for preventative and long-term approaches to address structural challenges such as poverty, the impact of climate change on livelihoods, and youth unemployment. She underlined the importance of sustained efforts and partnerships as an imperative to reinforce efforts to enable the full operationalization of the Yaoundé Architecture by addressing operational, technical, and financial issues that hamper its effective functioning. She informed that the UN, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and GGC are developing an interregional project to support the ICC in a revision of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, and to assess the status of the operationalization of the Yaoundé Architecture. She called on partners to provide support for the development of a strategic outlook and roadmap for the Yaoundé architecture. She reiterated the UN's continued and harmonized support to strengthening maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.
5. **Ms. Delphine Schantz, Director of the New York Office, United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**, informed of UNODC activities supporting maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, including the drafting of a handover agreement on piracy for the ECCAS region and addressing the root causes of piracy, violence, and conflict through an innovative community-based crime prevention project in the Niger Delta. She noted the Secretary General's call in his report of 2022 for a comprehensive review of the status of implementation of the Yaoundé Architecture to identify challenges, define the most optimal use of available resources, and outline a strategic vision for the next decade with recommendations for key institutions and Member States. She clarified that the cost of losses of maritime piracy is an estimated USD \$1.9 billion annually in the region. Further, she noted an increase in riverine crimes connected to acts of piracy and underscored the importance of effectively implementing international instruments and leveraging mechanisms of the UN Conventions on transitional organized crime and corruption. She recommended continued support for the capacity-building of security actors and the strengthening of synergies to enhance agile response.
6. **Dr. Emmanuel Budu Addo, Director of Administration and Regional Coordination, Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC)**, reiterated GGC's commitment to ensuring maritime peace, security, and safety in the Gulf of Guinea region. He informed of the appointment of a new leadership of the GGC. The new leadership will focus on developing a strategic framework with appropriate interventions to implement the mandate of the GGC, expanding the membership of the GGC to include all the countries within the Gulf of Guinea region, and

outlining measures and developing systems to ensure synergies between the GGC, ECOWAS and ECCAS. At the outset of developing a strategic framework, extensive consultations of all stakeholders as well as a review of the current systems and structures is required. He underlined capacity-building as essential to ensure efficient utilization of resources and effective implementation of programmes for optimal impact.

7. **Dr. Kamal-Deen Ali, Executive Director, Center for Maritime Law and Security Africa (CEMLAWS)**, reiterated the need for legal reforms to enhance maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. He informed of the work of CEMLAWS on research, information-sharing and advocacy on maritime security and governance, including providing support to develop maritime frameworks and establishing a platform for various stakeholders, including civil society organizations, minority groups, and women, to discuss maritime security related issues. To counter piracy in the region, he underlined the need for a broader concept and understanding of maritime insecurity, including on the root causes. In this regard, he acknowledged the importance of addressing the negative impact of maritime insecurity and transnational organized crime on fisheries and coastal communities, in particular on women. He clarified the need to address other types of transnational crime in addition to piracy, as well as to redesign counter-piracy approaches. He also reiterated the importance of community-level engagement and interventions.
8. **Dr. Ife Okafor-Yarwood, Lecturer in Sustainable Development, University of St. Andrews** acknowledged the lack of state-supported initiatives, mechanisms, and strategies to address the root causes of maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea. She noted that some of the initiatives intended to enhance economic growth, as well as pollution, overfishing and illegal fishing, have resulted in loss of livelihoods and poverty. As a result, incidents of violent clashes between local fishers and industrial vessels have occurred, and animosity toward the state and susceptibility to violence have increased. She underlined the issue of women's exclusion from decision-making, despite their significant role in fishing. Furthermore, she underscored that while men are prominent in criminal activities at sea, women are facilitating and enabling the execution of illicit activities. Therefore, she underlined that countering insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea requires an inclusive approach recognizing the gendered significance of ocean resources for coastal communities. She clarified that six countries in the region lose \$ 2.3 billion annually to illegal fishing. She recommended to tackle the issue urgently through international collaboration.
9. Member States welcomed the briefings and raised the following points:
  - They commended the successes of the decline of piracy as a result of strengthened cooperation between national, regional, and international stakeholders. They noted increased naval presence and stronger enforcement and convictions of criminal maritime activities.
  - They promote sustainable development and inclusive access to the blue economy as critical to lasting peace in the Gulf of Guinea.
  - They emphasized the importance of regional organizations, such as the African Union, ECOWAS, ECCAS, the G7++ Friends of the Gulf of Guinea and the European Union and underscored the need for continued collaboration.

- They stressed the need to address the political, socio-economic and environmental root causes and acknowledged the effects of poverty, unemployment, climate change, environmental degradation, and cross-border transnational organized crime on maritime insecurity in the region.
- They called for comprehensive legal frameworks and the greater enforcement of the rule of law and anti-corruption measures in line with applicable international laws, including international human rights law. They also reaffirmed the importance of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and the African Charter on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa as essential legal frameworks.
- They stressed the need for enhanced partnerships, in particular for capacity-building, with international partners such as the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA).
- They advocated for adequate, sustainable, and predictable financing for the full operationalization of the Yaoundé Architecture.
- They underlined that women are disproportionately affected by the underlying causes and effects of maritime insecurity and highlighted the important role of women in maritime security, criminal justice, and community-based prevention efforts. They called for the full, equal, and meaningful inclusion and participation of women to ensure sustainable peace and security.
- They noted the lack of inclusion of youth in political and economic spheres and stressed the importance of providing adequate socio-economic and decision-making opportunities for youth to building and sustaining peace.

10. In her concluding remarks, **Ms. Awa Dabo, Director and Deputy Head, UN Peacebuilding Support Office (DPPA)**, reiterated the need for multidimensional approaches to tackle the structural problems underpinning maritime insecurity in the region, including organized crime networks, weak political institutions, migration flows, and the lack of economic opportunities for young people in the region. In that regard, she informed of the Peacebuilding Fund's support in addressing some of the root causes in the region through its investments in youth, institutional capacities, and tackling cross-border themes such as transboundary crime and illicit trafficking. She also underscored the importance of close engagement with international financial institutions for greater coherence and alignment on root causes and prevention in the region.

#### ***Chair's recommendations***

- Continue to utilize the Commission as a platform to facilitate exchanges on the progress and lessons learned on the implementation of the Yaoundé Architecture.
- Encourage the Gulf of Guinea States to continue advancing the full operationalization of the Yaoundé Architecture.
- Continue advocating for inclusive, participatory, and community-based approaches and initiatives to advance maritime security, resilience, and sustainable peace and development in the Gulf of Guinea region.
- Encourage the international community to provide political accompaniment and financial and technical support to the Gulf of Guinea to fully implement Yaoundé Architecture.