

1. Maritime security: EU action plan on the Gulf of Guinea

On 16/3/2015 the EU Council adopted the Gulf of Guinea Action Plan 2015-2020, which complements the Gulf of Guinea Strategy adopted on 17/3/2014. The overall goal of the Action Plan is:

- 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.

This will be done by:

- enhancing the capabilities of coastal states of the Gulf of Guinea to tackle the complex and wide ranging challenges of maritime insecurity, organised crime and illegal fishing activities.

The implementation of the Action Plan is intended to reinforce intra-regional cooperation as well as to increase the coordination among the EU and its Member States, and international partners. An EU Senior Coordinator for the Gulf of Guinea will be appointed in this respect.

Piracy and armed robbery at sea feature prominently as a reason for the EU to adopt the Strategy and its Action Plan. Reference is made to the presence of EU flagged or owned vessels, the problem of under-reporting and adequate statistics, the safety of seafarers and the increasing pattern of violence, the need to create an appropriate regional legal framework for prevention of piracy. Migration is mentioned as an important dimension within and from the Gulf of Guinea region.

To achieve these results, the following types of actions are envisaged: capacity building and institutional support; provision of expertise and technical assistance; provision of training and equipment; support to regional cooperation and information sharing; encouraging the states in the region, through the IMO and other relevant fora to share good practice and lessons learnt amongst themselves and with private sector and industry stakeholders; close links and regular consultations with the private sector and industry on implementation of planned activities and on relevant proposals/recommendations/good practice.

Reference is made to the process initiated with the Code of Yaoundé (June 2013) which put forward a code of conduct to fight piracy, armed robbery against ships, and illicit maritime activity in West and Central Africa. As part of the Yaoundé process a multi-layered maritime security architecture is being put in place, through national, zonal, multi-national and regional centres and the Inter Regional Coordination Centre.