



COMHAFAT/ATLAFCO

CONFERENCE MINISTERIELLE SUR LA COOPERATION HALIEUTIQUE ENTRE LES ETATS AFRICAINS
RIVERAINS DE L'OCEAN ATLANTIQUE

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON FISHERIES COOPERATION AMONG AFRICAN STATES BORDERING
THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

Maritime piracy off the African Atlantic coastline: Extent and prospects for a more effective fight



The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea defines maritime piracy as "any unlawful act of violence or detention ... directed against another ship or aircraft ... on the high seas"

Tangier, Morocco, 18-19 September 2017

Presentation of the Think Tank meeting

The organization of this Think Tank meeting is part of ATLAFCO's 2017 action plan and is intended as a contribution to the efforts of the international community to make seas and oceans secure, to the development of coastal countries and beyond.

Context

The sea represents more than ever a vital stake for the economies of the coastal countries whose maritime trade, transport, fishing and tourism activities are important sectors.

For the African continent, which has 38 coastal countries out of 54, sea-related activities are not only a wealth that must be preserved but above all an opportunity for socio-economic development.

This is even more true for the ATLAFCO area with its 22 Member States open to the Atlantic Ocean, a coastline of more than 14 000 km, which gives it direct access to an enormous potential of marine resources, income generated by fishing , trade and tourism, and is a source of subsistence for both coastal and inland communities.

Nevertheless, this maritime access, which gives the region a strategic advantage for its economic development, is subject to a multitude of threats which seriously jeopardize the socio-economic contribution that maritime activities can provide. The maritime insecurity, including piracy is the most visible component of these threats.

This phenomenon was more widely known in East Africa, particularly in the Gulf of Aden area, but the upsurge in piracy from 54 to 95 between 2015 and 2016 makes the Gulf of Guinea another area of preference of maritime piracy in Africa.

Piracy is therefore not only a criminal problem; it is above all a major strategic hurdle to the development of the region. It is confirmed as one of the major threats to economic stability for both coastal and landlocked countries.

How can we explain the resurgence of this phenomenon in recent years? What approaches to solutions are recommended by the various international, regional and national actors facing this scourge?

These are essentially the main questions to be answered by our meeting.

The approach adopted

Our discussion will focus mainly on acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea. The intensification of piracy has revealed the low level of knowledge of the phenomenon in the region, so the meeting will provide an opportunity to take stock of its challenges and the reasons for its emergence and the precise situation of the phenomenon in the West African coast, the meeting will focus on regional and national efforts, as well as on the achieved results after the implementation of initiatives and actions taken either in isolation, mainly by States, or at regional and international levels.

Acts of maritime piracy jeopardize trade, tourism and fishing activities, and also constitute a major environmental threat for the region as a whole, with consequences that further weaken local populations. Piracy is therefore not only a criminal problem; it is above all a major strategic obstacle to the development of the region.

It is a question of identifying precisely the nature and extent of the phenomenon, explaining its emergence and measuring its socio-economic impact and consequences.

In addition, the meeting will analyze the scope and limitations of national and regional initiatives to combat piracy in the region. Indeed, given the scale of the phenomenon and its impact on socio-economic development of countries in the region, international attention has been drawn and regional initiatives have come to reinforce those taken at the state level.

Furthermore and in order to develop a new approach to tackling this threat, the meeting will propose ways to improve actions, techniques and means to better combat piracy in the maritime areas of the region. This discussion will also explore solutions based on lessons learned from experiments conducted previously in other parts of the world (East Africa and Indian Ocean ...).

Objectives of the meeting:

This event should help:

- To better identify the challenges of maritime insecurity in Africa;
- To highlight the definition of maritime piracy and international law;
- To take stock of the real maritime situation in the African Atlantic waters and the countries of the region;
- To identify the relevant provisions of the international legal instruments to be included in the national piracy legislation ;

- To analyze existing national texts on the basis of relevant provisions of international law on criminalization, jurisdiction, definition of offenses, coercive measures, and cooperation;
- To identify the dysfunctions of the institutional and operational framework of fighting piracy ;
Synthesis of questionnaires
- To review all initiatives aimed at addressing this phenomenon;
Reminder of international and regional initiatives
- To examine the state of application of instruments and measures to combat maritime piracy at the regional and national levels
- To highlight their advantages and inadequacies and the difficulties of their effective implementation by the States of the region,
- To Propose solutions to better deal with maritime piracy in the region

Expected results:

The meeting should led:

- To better understand the phenomenon in economic, social and legal terms;
- To have a precise knowledge of the security situation in the maritime waters of the African Atlantic coast;
- To be aware of different initiatives and their effective implementation;
- To examine their results and highlight the difficulties for their application in the African context;
- To propose solutions to better combat maritime piracy.

Conducting of the meeting

The meeting will take place over 2 days devoted to:

1st Session: Maritime piracy in Africa

- Maritime piracy and the legal framework
- The stakes of the maritime security in the region
- Nature and extent of piracy in the region
- Maritime piracy and maritime fisheries
- The specific origins of maritime piracy in West Africa

2nd session: The fight and the means of solving piracy issues: from isolated actions to institutional pooling efforts

- Limits of isolated security initiatives of the states of the Region
- Regional mechanisms to combat piracy in West Africa
- Strengthening of foreign partners

3rd session: For a more effective fight against piracy in Africa

- Improvement of the institutional and operational legal framework
- The advantages of coherent regional cooperation for maritime safety
- The operationalization of regional cooperation plans requires a stronger political commitment

4th session: Conclusion and recommendations