



## Concept Note

### International Maritime Security Working Group Meeting

#### Topic: Review of the Maritime Industry in the Gulf of Guinea: Present and Future Strategies for Integrated Responses to Maritime Safety, Security, and Economic Development

(Virtual Meeting, 17 December, 2024)

#### **Background:**

Ten years after the [Summit](#) of Heads of States and Governments of the Gulf of Guinea in Yaoundé, Cameroon, and ten years since the adoption of the [European Union Maritime Security Strategy](#) on the Gulf of Guinea region, significant progress has been made in enhancing maritime security along this strategic coastline. In recent years, piracy has notably [declined](#); however, other transnational organized crimes—such as illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, drug trafficking, and irregular migration—persist. These challenges raise concerns, especially among international partners and experts, as they undermine the potential of Africa's blue economy and disrupt global supply chains.

Recent disruptions in trade activities in the Red Sea reinforces the far-reaching impacts of political violence and state fragmentation on global supply chains. As one of the world's most strategic maritime straits. Instability in the Red Sea has had rippling effects across regions, extending from the Horn of Africa to the Cape of Good Hope and the Gulf of Guinea. This interconnectedness highlights that the security and prosperity of one region are closely tied to the stability of others, signalling the urgency for collaborative efforts to harness mutual opportunities and mitigate enduring and exiting threats. To remain competitive and resilient, African ports must prioritize investments in infrastructure and security to accommodate evolving global shipping trends.

Lastly, regional and international organizations are advancing initiatives to enhance the role of women in maritime security, recognizing their critical contributions to addressing the GoG region's complex governance challenges. In this context, two notable initiatives stand out for their impactful contributions; EnMAR - Maritime Action in the Gulf of Guinea and the African Union Agenda 2063. By fostering inclusive practices, these efforts aim to strengthen governance, improve operational effectiveness, and drive sustainable development and security across the Gulf of Guinea, where diverse perspectives are vital for promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth in Africa.

**Against this backdrop, the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Institute is hosting a working group meeting as part of ongoing regional and international efforts to promote maritime safety, security, and economic development in this strategic subregion. The aim is to encourage reflections on lessons**

**learned and evaluate the effectiveness of current maritime initiatives to sustain the progress achieved in the region while addressing existing challenges. Discussions will follow the Chatham House rules.**

**Specific Objectives (each will be addressed by a speaker)**

1. **Assessment of Current Trends in Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea (Regional and International Interests):** Various data sources indicate a significant decline in piracy and other maritime crimes in the Gulf of Guinea. This success can largely be attributed to the collective cooperation of numerous stakeholders, including regional navies, the Yaoundé Code of Conduct (YCoC) institutions, European Union, United States, G7++ Friends of the Gulf of Guinea (G7++ FoGG), GoG SHADE Forum, and other relevant regional bodies and stakeholders. These coordinated efforts have significantly enhanced security and reduced criminal activities in the region's waters.

However, there has been a notable shift in criminal activities towards other forms of transnational organized crime. Addressing this evolving threat requires adopting pragmatic and indigenous approaches that integrate measures to suppress maritime crimes with strategies aimed at improving the livelihoods of coastal communities and promoting the Blue Economy. Such approaches offer comprehensive and sustainable pathways to enhance security and foster socio-economic development in the Gulf of Guinea.

2. **Analysis of Gender Dynamics in Maritime Governance and Security in West and Central Africa:** This second dialogue will focus on evaluating the various initiatives undertaken to date to promote women's participation in maritime security and governance in West and Central Africa. The objective is to highlight key achievements while, importantly, identifying existing gaps. These insights will inform future strategies within the broader framework of Integrated Responses to Threats to Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Domain.
3. **Perspectives on Resource Allocation for Security, the Blue Economy, and Development in the Coastal States of the Gulf of Guinea:** The seas are increasingly recognized as essential economic resources, emphasizing the critical need for equitable resource allocation to support sustainable development in the Gulf of Guinea. However, regional challenges, such as limited naval budgets and inadequate inter-naval cooperation, hinder effective maritime governance and security. These constraints expose coastal states to vulnerabilities, including organized crime and illegal fishing, which threaten both the stability of the maritime domain and the resilience of local economies. By aligning resource management strategies with security and development priorities, the region can foster long-term prosperity, ensure the sustainable growth of the Blue Economy, and strengthen its collective capacity to address shared maritime threats