



# **GULF OF GUINEA MARITIME INSTITUTE**

**GoGMI - International Maritime Security  
Working Group Virtual Series Report**

## **REGIONAL AND NATIONAL MARITIME STRATEGIES;**

**PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES**

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## **REGIONAL AND NATIONAL MARITIME STRATEGIES: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES**

The first GoGMI IMSWG online virtual meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2020 was organized to discuss the prospects and challenges for Regional and National Strategies in governing and managing the Gulf of Guinea maritime space. Major highlights of the meeting are summarized below:

### **The Need for Regional and National Maritime Strategies**

Global pandemics have shown the ability to turn the focus of leaders of various countries on things that are important and one of them is the COVID-19 pandemic and the shipping world. As 90 percent of global trade is carried by sea, shipping has never been more crucial than now, supplying food and medical items across the globe.

The blue economy has huge potential for restoring and improving African economies post COVID-19. Regional and national maritime strategies are necessary but implementation is key, requiring a permanent interagency process. This includes all strategies; continental (AU), regional (ECOWAS & ECCAS), and national strategies.

Effective governance is primarily essential for developing and implementing regional and national strategies. Maritime threats are regional; transnational criminal organizations are regional with hijackings occurring off the coast of Benin and ending up in different jurisdictional waters. The Yaoundé Code of Conduct emphasizes the need for joint-action among regional agencies and African heads of states. Surveillance agencies should be included and not just the military in implementing maritime strategies. Very limited prosecutions for piracy is seen and this points out the fact that there is little to no deterrence as effective legal follow up is almost absent.

Strategies, if owned by political leaders, will be successful to a larger extent. Implementation process is also key for achieving the benefits of maritime strategies. Countries that have succeeded in doing so managed to tie their strategy implementation process to the national budget. Support from international partners and industry should also be efficiently managed, as well as monitoring and evaluation of implementation processes.

### **Legal Framework for Regional and National Maritime Strategies**

Maritime strategies include components at both regional and national level and are ultimately informed by interests at each level. Strategies are generally pursued towards achieving specific objectives and subject to maritime strategy. This discussion in particular, point towards promoting and harnessing all components of the blue economy including ensuring safety and security of the maritime domain, enhance regional governance of the maritime space, secure sea lines of communication and ultimately improving livelihood.

The African Union developed the Continental Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) which is to ensure that at regional or continental levels, the legal permission that exists in the EEZ can be harnessed collectively for the countries. A regional or national strategy will seek to expand claims and achieve Freedom of the High Seas while trying to ensure that the peculiarities of these freedoms that can inure to regional benefits are harnessed but at the same time, competitively denying or limiting others from exercising these freedoms at the regional level.

At regional levels, countries must adopt regional strategies that will help achieve common interests within the exploitation of the common heritage of mankind.

## **The ECOWAS and AU Maritime Strategy**

With abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery by individual nations in the 1800s, SubSaharan African countries started gaining independence post 1955. The Organization of African Unity (replaced by African Union in 2002) was formed in 1963 with 32 African state signatories. The African group contributed exceptionally in the third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (1973 – 1982), which introduced the concept of Exclusive Economic Zone and Sovereign rights in the 200 mile limit, granting geographically disadvantaged States rights. The UNCLOS III convention was signed in 1982 by an overwhelming majority of African States.

The Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy 2050 (AIMS) was adopted by the AU in 2012 as an overarching Maritime Policy and Strategy. The African Charter on Maritime Security, Safety and Development in Africa – Lomé Charter, was also developed in 2016.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Treaty was signed in 1975. In 1994, the treaty for African Economic Community entered into force, establishing phased integration of Africa. It incorporated UNCLOS principles (GDS) and emphasized on RECs and RMs being the first pillar for implementation. The ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Strategy was developed in 2014. ECOWAS has been exceptional as a coherent regional body in finding a common ground to implement many regional policies proposed by continental and international bodies.

A Memorandum of Understanding was formed in 2013 between Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) on maritime safety and security in Central and West Africa.

The creation of the combined exclusive maritime zone as envisaged by AIMS and the new delimitation of maritime boundaries between states is contributing to the management and pooling of resources together by African states. Discoveries of large offshore hydrocarbons are taking place all the way from Mauritania down to Angola. Continentally, Uganda, Ethiopia and Kenya are also discovering energy resources. Production sharing regarding exploitation of new hydrocarbon discoveries is the norm continentally.

Challenges include, resolution of fisheries management crises, resolution of environmental management issues, supra management of transnational crimes affecting maritime security, management of the illegal migrant crises in the Mediterranean Sea and acceptance of foreign participation and bases despite African collective defense strategies.

Recommended course of action include, processing of raw materials of natural resources to some degree as required by Agenda 2063 to change the very nature of previous bulk shipping and improve infrastructure expansion. Africa states must resolve the environmental management issues including the impact of climate change and the supra-management of transnational and inter-continental crimes as they affect regional maritime security.

## **Maritime Strategy for Small Powers**

No nation has developed and become a superpower without the use of the sea. Maritime power has traditionally been employed to control sea communications for the general economic welfare of the sea dependent states.

African states largely concentrate on policies especially because they seek immediate results rather than projecting into what needs to be achieved in the future. Small powers, particularly in Africa, have enough trouble coping with policy crisis which deal with more immediate execution of initiatives to address critical needs and requirements.

Maritime Strategy fosters a comprehensive, coherent and relevant approach to ocean management, maritime safety and security. A major challenge confronting small powers is the lack of a clearly maritime strategy. Maritime strategy employs maritime power to help shape the future environment. It is clear that land strategy has not worked for African countries, so it is worth turning to maritime strategy.

The Gulf of Guinea region cannot have economic development when the sea lines of communication are not secured. African countries need to pull resources and start a massive ship building industry, improve their way of interaction with the sea, modernize the fishing industry and introduce more regulation to conserve stocks and promote maritime tourism.

## **Ghana's National Integrated Maritime Strategy (NIMS); The Journey So Far.**

One important issue that is essential when discussing Ghana's National Integrated Maritime Strategy is the Blue Economy, having to deal with issues of food security, livelihoods, development and investment within the maritime space.

Ghana's maritime estate value is immeasurable as the fisheries sector alone generates over US 1billion in revenue each year, accounting for at least 5 percent of Ghana's agricultural gross domestic product.

A major strategic objective of Ghana's maritime strategy is the strengthening of framework for effective governance which will boost the continuous development of a thriving blue economy and other maritime sector interests.

The Institutional framework of the strategy establishes the creation of a National Maritime Council, chaired by the Vice President of the Republic of Ghana, to deliberate on issues of governance and policy directives and a national maritime steering group. This will be chaired by a national coordinator for dialogues and policy actions across the country.

The NIMS is being developed to also complement existing national, sub-regional and continental efforts including the AIMS 2050, ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Strategy, Yaoundé Code of Conduct and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ghana's national maritime strategy highlights benefits in income generation, harnessing revenue potential of the maritime domain and instituting proper management of the fisheries sector which acts as an engineer for growth of several sectors of the economy.



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