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Insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea: Assessing the Threats, Preparing the Response

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On June 6, 2013, the International Peace Institute (IPI) convened a roundtable discussion on the peace and security challenges facing the Gulf of Guinea. The meeting was a component of the African Union (AU)-IPI partnership agreement for the period 2012–2014, which focuses on security threats and policy responses in the Sahel-Saharan region and the Gulf of Guinea, among other areas.

The roundtable discussion brought together approximately forty policy-makers including senior officials from the United Nations and regional organizations of the Gulf of Guinea, permanent representatives to the United Nations, as well as experts from relevant civil society organizations, academic institutions, and think tanks.

This meeting note summarizes the key themes of the seminar and was drafted by Mireille Affa'a-Mindzie, research fellow of IPI's Africa program, and Fiona Blyth, former research assistant of IPI's Africa program. The note reflects the rapporteurs' interpretation of the meeting and not necessarily the views of all of the participants.

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Introduction

The International Peace Institute convened a roundtable discussion on “Insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea: Assessing the Threats, Preparing the Response” on June 6, 2013, in New York. The meeting aimed to help develop a better understanding of the peace and security challenges facing the Gulf of Guinea by examining the multifaceted threats to the stability of the region; considering national, regional, and international responses to these threats; and providing practical policy recommendations with a view to strengthening regional and international responses.

The roundtable discussion was organized into two panels. The first panel identified and assessed the current and emerging peace and security threats in the Gulf of Guinea. The panelists outlined the key drivers of instability in the region and highlighted the interconnected and transnational nature of many of these factors. The second panel examined the efforts planned or underway to address these peace and security challenges, paying particular attention to the role played by regional and subregional organizations. The panelists considered the constraints and obstacles these organizations face in addressing these challenges and offered recommendations for strengthening cooperation among them as well as with global institutions.

The participants highlighted the multifaceted nature of insecurity factors in the Gulf of Guinea. Piracy and maritime insecurity are some of the symptoms of growing regional insecurity, but the triggers can be attributed to economic deprivation and exclusion, poor governance and limited legitimacy, pollution, natural resources management, as well as the impact of the crisis in the Sahel region and the spread of transnational crime. Joint efforts are being developed to address these challenges, which promote innovative cross-regional cooperation initiatives. However, beyond the resources allocated to the fight against maritime insecurity, additional and more holistic efforts are needed to address the comprehensive peace and security challenges threatening stability in the Gulf of Guinea region.

The first section of this meeting note presents the current and emerging peace and security threats in the Gulf of Guinea region. The second section highlights the national, regional, and international measures being developed or implemented to confront insecurity in the region.

Current and Emerging Peace and Security Threats in the Gulf of Guinea

Although the Gulf of Guinea geographic region usually includes the coastal countries of West Africa from Liberia to Gabon, maritime security policies tend to run from Senegal to Angola.¹ In addition, the transnational nature of many of the area's security challenges means that central parts of Africa are sometimes included in the region. The Gulf of Guinea has long had strategic importance due to global shipping routes that channel goods from the Americas, through Africa, and north into Europe. This established trade route has for centuries been a corridor for the movement of both legal and illicit goods. In addition, the region is rich in natural resources including hydrocarbon deposits, oil, fish, timber, and mineral resources, which are all globally exported. In 2012 it was estimated that the Gulf of Guinea region produced approximately 4 percent of global oil extraction (approximately 3 million barrels a day) and by 2015, the region will supply about a quarter of the United States' oil.²

Despite this, the Gulf of Guinea faces a number of challenges to its stability, which frequently manifest themselves at sea, but whose origins are land based. As one participant noted, "pirates are not born at sea, they are born on land." Moreover, in recent months, the peace and stability challenges in the Gulf of Guinea have been worsened by crises in the Sahel and North Africa, which have exacerbated the already fragile situation in the region. The roundtable discussion examined the current and emerging threats in the region, namely economic deprivation and the politics of exclusion; legitimacy deficit, poor governance, and pervasive corruption; natural resource mismanagement;

pollution; as well as international influences.

ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION AND THE POLITICS OF EXCLUSION

Stability must start with human security. However, many communities in the Gulf of Guinea region suffer from chronic insecurity in their daily lives. Underdeveloped and undiversified economies have created an over-reliance on subsistence agriculture, which leaves many communities working for survival rather than growth. These countries, such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Niger, also have some of the lowest access to electricity rates in the world.³ Basic needs are unmet and healthcare, sanitation, and public services are not universal. Lack of education has resulted in low literacy rates, constrained skills development, and stunted infrastructure expansion resulting in a lack of employment opportunities, isolated communities, and uncertain livelihoods. As one participant noted, "if you cannot count, you don't count," as poor numeracy levels deny citizens a role in building the economic future of their countries. The youth populations of many of the countries in the region are left with few opportunities for gainful employment providing a fertile recruiting ground for insurgent groups and criminal networks who offer work, financial incentives, status, and in some cases, basic services and protection to communities in need—effectively replacing the state.

Economic inequality is worsened by social inequality as ethnic and tribal divisions exclude some groups and women from decision making, both formal and informal representation, and many employment sectors.

These factors have exacerbated environmental and demographic shifts, such as increasing desertification and high infant birth rates, to create acute food insecurity in the region.⁴

1 Many studies define the region as the nine states that comprise the Gulf of Guinea Commission: Angola, Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), São Tomé and Príncipe. For example, see the International Crisis Group, "The Gulf of Guinea: The New Danger Zone," Africa Report No. 195, December 12, 2012.

2 Reuters, "Key Political Risks in the Gulf of Guinea," February 10, 2012, available at www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/10/gulfofguinea-risks-idAFL5E8D73CZ20120210?sp=true.

3 Onyej Bazilian et al., "Oil, Energy Poverty and Resource Dependence in West Africa," *Journal of Energy and Natural Resources Law* 31, No. 1 (2013): 33–53, available at http://erg.berkeley.edu/publications/Recent_Publications/Faculty/Dan_Kammen/journalofenergy.pdf.

4 Claudia Ringler et al., "Climate Change Impacts on Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa," International Food Policy Research Institute, December 2012, available at www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp01042.pdf.

LEGITIMACY DEFICIT, POOR GOVERNANCE, AND PERVASIVE CORRUPTION

Poor social service delivery stems from poor governance and highly centralized national administrations that have limited dialogue with and accountability to their citizens. Incumbent administrations are hard to change by democratic means.⁵ In desperation, populations have resorted to violence to effect change. Unconstitutional changes of government (such as in Guinea-Conakry, Guinea-Bissau, and Mali) have, however, further weakened citizens' confidence in governments and disputed elections are often fought on ethnic rather than political lines, therefore favoring some groups and disenfranchising others. There is little independent oversight of governments, and national executive and judicial institutions are fragile. Many administrations are bolstered by security forces that protect the powerful and intimidate the weak, and easy access to weapons reinforces power once held. As one participant commented "if you have a gun, you have a say." At a regional level, interstate disputes over borders and resources have resulted in a lack of cooperation and of common legal frameworks. Spoilers and criminals are therefore able to move between jurisdictions across porous borders without fear of reprisals because definitions of offenses are unclear, and enforcement mechanisms are not coherent between territories. This economic and political fragmentation has hindered regional responses to challenges that are common to many states in the region.

Social and economic injustices are compounded in the region by habitual corruption evident from the top of society down through all levels.⁶ This further erodes confidence in governments, and impunity of officials restricts reform. The benefits of financial inflows from donors are often not felt at a

local level because funds are appropriated by officials before they reach their intended beneficiary.

NATURAL RESOURCE MISMANAGEMENT

The riches of the region have benefited only an elite few but not the local populations.⁷ Revenues have not been invested in infrastructure and development, and communities see their governments doing deals with international companies whom they view as stealing their oil and hydrocarbon reserves. This perceived theft exists alongside actual theft of resources through pipeline vandalism and illegal bunkering where oil is stolen directly from pipelines, refined, and sold in local and international markets.⁸

In addition to oil exploitation, the effects of illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing are being felt in the region. West African waters are estimated to have the highest levels of IUU fishing in the world. This represents up to 37 percent of the region's catch, resulting in economic losses and compromising the food security and livelihoods of coastal communities.⁹ Trawlers damage seabed habitats and trap large numbers of vulnerable species, such as sharks and turtles, in their catch. In addition to the environmental damage, the large catches made by illegal boats deplete fish stocks and deny fish to local, artisanal fishermen.

Resource mismanagement and lack of effective regulations therefore worsens economic hardship and builds resentment among communities. As populations see their resources being used to benefit others, there is an increased risk of violence to seize their "rightful share."

POLLUTION

Aggressive natural resource exploitation has degraded the environment and polluted ecosystems. The high levels of water and air pollution are significant contributing factors to instability in the region, not only in terms of environmental and

5 Blessing-Miles Tendi, "Why Robert Mugabe Scored a Landslide Victory in Zimbabwean Elections," *The Guardian*, August 5, 2013, available at www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/05/robert-mugabe-zimbabwe-election-zanu-pf. "There is a phenomenon in African politics called the preponderance of incumbency. Simply put, it maintains that it is difficult to defeat an incumbent president in an election because they control the state institutions, which they can use to retain power. Consequently, only in Zambia, where presidents Kenneth Kaunda and Rupiah Banda lost in the 1991 and 2011 respectively, is there an established record of incumbents losing to an opposition challenger."

6 Human Rights Watch, "Corruption on Trial?," August 25, 2011, available at www.hrw.org/reports/2011/08/25/corruption-trial.

7 Michael Roll and Sebastian Sperling eds., "Fuelling the World—Failing the Region? Oil Governance and Development in Africa's Gulf of Guinea," Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, August 2011, available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/nigeria/08607.pdf>.

8 United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, "Maritime Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea," in *Transnational Organized Crime in West Africa: A Threat Assessment*, (2013), pp. 45–52, available at www.unodc.org/documents/toc/Reports/TOCTAWestAfrica/West_Africa_TOC_PIRACY.pdf.

9 Environmental Justice Foundation, "Pirate Fishing Exposed: The Fight Against Illegal Fishing in West Africa and the EU," 2012, available at <http://ejfoundation.org/sites/default/files/public/Pirate%20Fishing%20Exposed.pdf>.

economic impact, but also by their contribution to a climate of desperation among the population. Gas flaring by oil production companies releases toxic chemicals into the air, damaging the environment and community health.¹⁰ Outdoor air pollution in West Africa is responsible for approximately 3.3 million deaths every year,¹¹ and rapidly increasing levels of oil production have incurred spills and leakage of oil into the marine environment, polluting the ecosystem and further endangering fisheries and livelihoods. Participants noted the international response to the spill in the Gulf of Mexico, but little attention has been paid to the ongoing effects of oil spills in the Niger Delta.

Extractive industries such as iron-ore mining have also taken their toll on the ecology of the region and have combined with the effects of climate change, migration, and urbanization to put existing, weak systems under strain.

INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCES

While many of the challenges to stability in the region are homegrown, some are imported into the Gulf of Guinea. In particular, the crisis in the north of Mali in 2012 enabled international terrorist groups to co-opt local grievances to galvanize support and radicalize local populations in the neighboring region. In the same way, international terrorist groups have found sympathetic audiences in West Africa by linking global jihad to local injustices and providing disenfranchised groups with a violent means of being heard. The proximity of terrorist groups in the Sahel, combined with the migration of people and weapons precipitated by events in Mali and in North Africa, has contributed to instability in the Gulf of Guinea. As over 300,000 people have been displaced by the conflict in Mali, populations have dispersed to neighboring regions, and the massive influx of people brought new ideologies and ethnic groups to some of the Gulf of Guinea countries.

International terrorism penetration has coincided with a rise in transnational organized crime as insurgent groups have found traditional trade routes and informal economies useful vehicles for the illegal movement of drugs, goods,

and people. Porous borders, limited state reach, and weak enforcement mechanisms further facilitate this illicit channel. Participants noted that local communities see that crime pays as armed gangs receive huge financial dividends for maritime seizures, and terrorist groups extract large ransom payments for hostages. Kidnapping as well as human and drug trafficking are therefore prevalent.

To address these multifaceted challenges, countries in the region, regional organizations, and the international community have developed a set of responses that were examined at the roundtable meeting.

Confronting Insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea

Strategies to address insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea region are being planned or implemented at three levels: national, regional, and international.

NATIONAL RESPONSES

Participants proposed a number of initiatives which could be developed by individual countries to address the challenges posed by maritime insecurity. Such initiatives include efforts to increase national attention to the maritime domain, as well as to improve equipment and training of the relevant security personnel. Fighting piracy requires strengthening good governance and transparency, especially with regard to oil exploitation. Transparent management and equitable sharing of oil funds can help alleviate poverty. Moreover, awareness-raising and the ratification and domestication of international instruments on maritime security, including the 1988 *Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation*, can help reduce maritime insecurity.

In Nigeria, a joint task force bringing together the army, navy, air force, and the mobile police was established in the Niger Delta in 2004 to restore order and help reduce oil theft—namely oil bunkering, pipeline vandalism, and illegal refineries.¹² In addition, a campaign was launched

10 Phil Lee, "Shell Takes a First Step Towards Solving the Gas Flaring Issue in Nigeria," Friends of the Earth International, May 31, 2010, available at www.foei.org/en/what-we-do/mining-oil-gas/latest-news/oil-giant-takes-a-first-step-towards-solving-the-gas-flaring-issue-in-nigeria.

11 UN News Centre, "Dangers of Air Pollution Worse Than Previously Thought, UN Health Agency Warns," April 8, 2013, available at www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?Cr=pollution&NewsID=44586#_Uf_2eXIfiPg.

12 Amnesty International, "Eyes on Nigeria: Conflict in the Niger Delta," 2011, available at www.eyesonnigeria.org/EON_Delta.html.

to sensitize the populations on the risk of using illegal or “blood” oil—a process that costs Nigeria some 10 percent of its daily production and billions of dollars every year for the benefit of local syndicates and rogue international traders.¹³ In Benin, where the port of Cotonou provides up to 65 percent of the West African country’s income, the recent piracy upsurge has disrupted economic activities with a decrease in ships from 150 to 30 monthly between January and July 2011. In response, Benin has implemented a number of measures, involving both government structures and civil society, which aim to develop an integrated response to the comprehensive security challenges. These activities take into account the threats posed by security both at sea and on land, and local monitoring mechanisms have been established in various communities.

Besides individual country responses, national efforts to tackle maritime insecurity can be initiated at the bilateral level. Such cooperation began between Benin and Nigeria, with the acquisition of logistical capacity—including vessels and the installation of radar stations covering the region—which helped to ensure the protection of ships by facilitating bilateral patrols and reinforcing proximity surveillance. These efforts resulted in a critical reduction of piracy and other illegal activities since July 2012, from approximately thirty pirate attacks per month to none as of June 2013. Moreover, considering that the response to maritime insecurity should go beyond military action, bilateral efforts also seek to strengthen policing on land and in territorial waters. In that regard, Benin and Nigeria have pledged to harmonize their legal frameworks punishing maritime crime, wherever the activity takes place.

SUBREGIONAL AND CONTINENTAL INITIATIVES

At the initiative of President Thomas Yayi Boni of Benin and a number of bilateral and international

partners including France, the US, and the UN Security Council, new strategies to overcome the growing challenges in the Gulf of Guinea were developed. In 2012, Benin started developing a regional strategy. These efforts culminated in the March 2013 ministerial conference on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea held in Cotonou, organized in partnership with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) in response to Security Council Resolution 2039 adopted in February 2012.¹⁴ The Cotonou conference paved the way for the June 2013 summit in Yaoundé, Cameroon, which brought together twenty-five countries from the Gulf of Guinea to formalize the adoption of an integrated response to a comprehensive security challenge in the region.

At the subregional level, ECCAS countries adopted a maritime safety and security strategy in 2008, which aims to ensure security by protecting offshore oil resources, fisheries, and sea routes.¹⁵ Central African states of the Gulf of Guinea have organized themselves into zones in order to strengthen their cooperation, and they have launched joint patrols. In West Africa, where ECOWAS member states have opened their borders to the free movement of persons, participants at the New York roundtable noted that these borders should not be closed to security institutions. ECOWAS is also in the process of developing its own integrated maritime strategy, building on the regional efforts to strengthen economic integration.¹⁶ However, these efforts have recently been stalled by crises in Guinea-Bissau and Mali.

The eight member states of the Gulf of Guinea Commission belong to both ECCAS and ECOWAS, and the GGC covers the entire region with a membership open to all the relevant

13 Jon Gambrell and Associated Press, “Oil Bunkering Threatens Nigeria’s Economy, Environment,” *The Washington Post*, July 20, 2013, available at http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-07-20/national/40693323_1_crude-production-diebu-nigeria-s.

14 United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), “UN Supports the Development of a Regional Strategy Against Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, Cotonou,” March 19, 2013, available at <http://unowa.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=JtbNwziEUQM%3D&tabid=765&mid=1796>.

15 Commander Michael L. Baker, “Toward an African Maritime Economy: Empowering the African Union to Revolutionize the African Maritime Sector,” *Naval War College Review* 64, No. 2 (Spring 2011): 39–62, available at www.usnwc.edu/getattachment/b49b0b07-c0a4-41e1-964d-dc37cf03e0b0/Toward-an-African-Maritime-Economy--Empowering-the.

16 At the 43rd ordinary session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government held in Abuja, Nigeria in July 2013, regional leaders directed the ECOWAS Commission to facilitate the adoption of the ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Strategy and the establishment of Pilot Model Zone E within the framework of the strategy.

countries.¹⁷ GGC members are also in the process of developing a region-wide strategy, which takes into account the existing initiatives. Plans are underway to reinforce cooperation between ECCAS and ECOWAS with the establishment of an Interregional Center for the Coordination of Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea; and particular focus is put on Cameroun, Côte d'Ivoire, and Nigeria as hot spots. Together with ECCAS, ECOWAS, and with the support of the international community, the GGC also worked on preparing both the Cotonou conference and the Yaoundé summit convened respectively in March and June 2013.

At the continental level, the AU has developed its 2050 Integrated Maritime Strategy (AIM Strategy), which builds on previous national and international frameworks regulating maritime initiatives in Africa. Recognizing the vast potential for economic development offered by the continent's maritime domain, the AIM Strategy aims (1) to foster increased wealth creation from Africa's inland waters, oceans, and seas by developing a sustainable economy; and (2) to ensure maritime safety and security and the protection of the marine environment.¹⁸ The strategy was adopted by the Second Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Maritime-related Affairs, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in December 2012. In addition to the strategy, the Addis Ababa conference adopted a plan of action for its operationalization. The conference further endorsed the proposal to establish, within the AU Commission, a fully-fledged Department of Maritime Affairs and a High-Level College of Champions.¹⁹ Composed of selected African leaders, the College of Champions will seek to leverage, through sustained lobbying, the necessary political will and buy-in and to collect the required resources for the implementation of the strategy.

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S RESPONSE

The UN has been actively involved in shaping government responses to piracy. Following President Yayi Boni's call to support national efforts, the Security Council adopted Resolution 2018 in October 2011, condemning all acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea committed off the coast of Gulf of Guinea states, and calling on regional organizations and the countries concerned to work toward a comprehensive strategy to facilitate the prosecution of alleged perpetrators of such acts.²⁰ Complementing the Council's initiative, the UN secretary-general sent a multidisciplinary mission to the Gulf of Guinea in November 2011, with the objectives "to assess the scope of the piracy threat in (the region) and to make recommendations on possible measures the United Nations and the international community as a whole could implement to respond in an effective manner to the dangers posed by that threat."²¹ The mission report was presented to the Security Council, which adopted Resolution 2039, urging Gulf of Guinea states, with the support of the international community, to develop and implement national maritime security strategies with a particular focus on the prevention and repression of piracy and armed robbery at sea, as well as the prosecution and punishment of those convicted of such crimes.²² The UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) is entrusted with supporting the regional efforts.

The UN, through its offices in Central and West Africa, supported the preparations for the Yaoundé summit in June 2013. The United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) helped develop a common agenda for the summit, and a steering committee was established to lead to the meeting. Political momentum was maintained at

17 The Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) was founded in 1999, and it comprises Angola, Cameroon, DRC, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Nigeria, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

18 African Union, "2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy," available at [http://pages.au.int/sites/default/files/2050%20AIM%20Strategy%20\(Eng\)_0.pdf](http://pages.au.int/sites/default/files/2050%20AIM%20Strategy%20(Eng)_0.pdf).

19 African Union, "The Second Conference of African Ministers in Charge of Maritime-related Affairs Consider the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (2050 AIM Strategy)," Press Release No. 149, 2012, available at <http://pages.au.int/sites/default/files/Press%20Release%20ENG.pdf>.

20 United Nations, Security Council Resolution 2018 (October 31, 2011), UN Doc. S/RES/2018, available at [www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2018\(2011\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2018(2011)).

21 United Nations Security Council, "Letter Dated January 18, 2012 from the Secretary-General Addressed to the President of the Security Council, Report of the United Nations Assessment Mission on Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea (7 to 24 November 2011)" (January 19, 2012), UN Doc. S/2012/45, available at www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/AUUN%20S%202012%2045.pdf.

22 United Nations Security Council Resolution 2039 (February 29, 2012), UN Doc. S/RES/2039, available at [www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2039\(2012\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2039(2012)).

the regional level, and the recommendation to adopt three separate documents at the end of the summit illustrated an innovative approach at three levels of integration: (1) within the Gulf of Guinea countries with the necessary coordination between Central and West Africa; (2) among regional organizations namely ECCAS, ECOWAS, and the GGC; and (3) with the UN, which remained involved during the entire process.

THE YAOUNDÉ SUMMIT ON MARITIME SAFETY AND SECURITY: KEY OUTCOMES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The Yaoundé summit, which took place after the New York roundtable, adopted the following three documents:²³

- *Declaration of the Heads of State and Government of Central and West African States on Maritime Safety and Security in Their Common Maritime Domain:* The declaration commits its signatories to work for the promotion of peace, security, and stability in the West and Central African maritime area through the mobilization of adequate operational resources both at the institutional level and in terms of logistics. The declaration also calls for ECCAS, ECOWAS, and the GGC to promote activities aimed at cooperation and coordination, as well as pooling together and interoperability of resources among their members. Moreover, the Yaoundé declaration called for cooperation with international strategic partners.
- *Memorandum of Understanding Among ECCAS, ECOWAS, and the GGC on Maritime Safety and Security in Central and West Africa:* The memorandum will facilitate the coordination and implementation of joint activities; sharing of experiences and the exchange of information on suspicious movements and activities at sea; the harmonization of laws on piracy and other illegal activities; the harmonization of control procedures to reinforce the fight against crimes at sea; and the establishment of an inter-regional coordination center for the implementation of the regional strategy for maritime safety and security.
- *Code of Conduct Concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery Against Ships, and Illicit Maritime Activities in Central and West Africa:* The code of conduct aims to ensure full cooperation in the repression of transnational organized crime in the maritime domain, maritime terrorism, IUU fishing, and other illegal activities at sea. The code of conduct will enter into force upon signature by two or more signatories. Nonbinding for the first three years, a review will take place after this initial period of time to eventually transform the document into a binding multilateral agreement; assess its implementation; and share information, experiences, and best practices.

Key lessons learned from the process that led to the Yaoundé summit highlight the importance of a strong commitment of regional leaders for any international cooperation initiative to succeed. The New York roundtable emphasized the need for individual Gulf of Guinea countries to take full responsibility in tackling maritime insecurity, before regional organizations are able to come together. Operationalizing the outcomes of the Yaoundé summit depends on the political will of member states. Regular interaction and the development of an overall plan, as well as national action plans with clear, realistic, and measurable objectives are essential. The three regional secretariats should serve as the engine. Clarity is needed on “who does what,” and coordination must be enhanced both at national and international levels, as well as among the subregional and inter-regional organizations. Effective monitoring and adequate follow-up will also be necessary.

For these joint efforts to succeed, support from international partners and effective mobilization of resources remain crucial. The high cost of securing peace in the Gulf of Guinea, which none of the countries in the region can carry alone, renders international assistance necessary. China, France, and the US have already provided support to some countries in the region. In addition, the UN can offer technical assistance and further help countries in the Gulf of Guinea region to mobilize resources. However, more support is needed.

²³ African Union, “Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea,” Yaoundé, Cameroon, June 24–25, 2013, available at <http://pages.au.int/maritime/events/summit-heads-state-and-government-maritime-safety-and-security-gulf-guinea-yaounde-cameroon>.

RESPONSE CHALLENGES

Cooperation challenges among the twenty-five countries in the Gulf of Guinea and at the cross-regional level between Central and West African organizations make the situation complex. Following the Yaoundé summit, an important challenge will be to keep the issue of maritime insecurity on the agenda of the international community. Participants at the New York roundtable recommended continued lobbying of Security Council members, to translate the outcomes of the Yaoundé summit into a third resolution. In that regard, the risk of attention shifting to crises in the Sahel and in the Central African Republic was highlighted. For countries in the Gulf of Guinea region, emphasis should be put on the importance of addressing a preventable security risk while it has not yet erupted into a major crisis. The Security Council's horizon scanning sessions are a useful mechanism for preventative diplomacy.

While the UN and the Security Council have extensive experience in addressing land-based insecurity, their understanding of maritime instability is less mature. The roundtable participants noted that, the Council was reluctant to address piracy in both national and international waters in Resolution 2029 adopted in February 2012 due in part to national interests. For successful implementation of the resolution, Council members must maintain their concern for insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea. In addition to the Security Council and DPA, the UN response to insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea is being developed by its Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna, the Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome, and other specialized agencies. The UN's usual practice of working in silos persists. Participants recommended the integration of the UN response to maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea, in the same way as the regional response is being integrated.

Discussions further highlighted the disconnect between the underlying issues causing insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea region, and the response being developed by regional organizations, which seems to be geared only toward maritime insecurity. To move beyond strategies targeted only at the symptoms of insecurity in the region, a holistic approach is needed, which should target issues

such as the governance deficit, the impact of climate change and migrations on insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea, social and economic development challenges, as well as youth unemployment.

More than in any other region in the world, Africa needs effective governments and stronger states that are capable of ensuring security for their populations and at their borders. At the same time, Africa needs more transparent and democratic states. In a context where issues of poor governance and corruption continue to challenge the exploitation and equitable sharing of extractive resources and where communities have embraced criminal activities in defiance of corrupt governments, efforts to strengthen the state should go hand in hand with more inclusive and accountable governments.

The good news coming out of Africa is its improved economic performance. However, the seminar also noted that the global energy market is changing as a result of fracking, which impacts the nature and origin of the demand for West African oil. As a result, while Africa still needs assistance from the international community, continued economic growth is an urgent necessity to support ongoing development efforts. In that regard, Africa's green revolution aimed at promoting rapid and sustainable agricultural growth, combined with industrialization, regional integration, and the development of infrastructure were seen as essential. However, despite innovative policies and programs such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) current cooperation initiatives are limited. Regional organizations can only encourage countries that are doing well to serve as models and to promote investments in areas and regions with comparative advantages. They do not have any enforcement power to compel their members to provide facilities for their populations to earn a decent income and live a decent life.

With the median age standing in Africa at nineteen, the provision of employment opportunities to the youth is a critical component of ongoing efforts to prevent instability. The participants at the roundtable observed that the response to piracy has not been targeted directly at the youth. Nonetheless, in Benin, national initiatives promoting public-private partnerships encourage

the return of young people to agriculture. With the support of UNDP, professional training is provided to unemployed youth, who can apply their new skills in agricultural development programs for example.

Further concerns were raised about the links between insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea and the crisis in Mali and the Sahel, and the connections to be established between countries in both regions. The cooperation among pirates from the East African Sahel and those from the Gulf of Guinea should provide an incentive for stronger cooperation among governments. As one participant noted, “security at sea should enhance security inland.” In Benin for example, the government already cooperates with its counterparts in landlocked Mali and Niger, since both countries operate docks in the Cotonou port. Such cooperation should be pursued, despite growing challenges to prevent various types of trafficking from expanding from the Gulf of Guinea to the Sahel. Institutional cross-regional cooperation should also be reinforced. However, within regional groupings policy differences exist. For instance within ECCAS, some member states remain firmly opposed to free movement of populations for fear of destabilization and increased pressures on local economies. At the same time, responses to the crisis in the Sahel were led by ECOWAS with no involvement of the GGC. And with regard to the international community’s response, the roundtable suggested enhancing the influence of the African Group in the UN to ensure that the focus, although limited, on the crisis in Mali and the Sahel, does not entirely divert attention from the situation in the Gulf of Guinea.

Conclusion

The causes of maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea are multiple and multilayered, and they are manifest in violence, corruption, and in communities that resort to any means available to improve their circumstances—even if through illegal trade, insurgency, or piracy. This pattern is hard to break since those who achieve a level of survivability and

wealth are so fearful of losing it that they bolster their positions and perpetuate the drivers of instability. Mutual suspicion and a lack of trust therefore exist between citizens and their rulers and between countries.

Most of the structural drivers of instability are homegrown but become exacerbated by regional and international factors. The challenges of the Gulf of Guinea are interlinked with events in the Sahel and North Africa. Similarly, instability at sea cannot be isolated from land-based factors since maritime insecurity has its origins on land. With international attention directed at the region, this is a good time to address the wider causes of instability and examine ways of tackling them through comprehensive response strategies.

Innovative approaches focusing on regional and international cooperation have facilitated the development of integrated maritime strategies focusing on piracy and armed robbery at sea. Regional strategies also seek to tap into African countries’ potential to build sustainable maritime economies. However, for these various strategies to become reality, sustained political will and commitment at the national level, enhanced cooperation among Central and West African organizations, and the necessary support of the international community in providing technical assistance and facilitating resource mobilization remain key.

To address the complex factors of insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea, its structural causes should also be dealt with. Security-focused approaches on sea and land must be part of holistic strategies to address rampant governance deficiencies, social and economic development challenges, as well as widespread youth unemployment. Finally, the spread of transnational crime from the Gulf of Guinea through to the Sahel-Sahara constitutes a new security threat that calls for stronger cooperation among countries and subregional organizations in the two regions. For a comprehensive and sustainable response to the peace and security challenges in the Gulf of Guinea, all of these dimensions must be taken into account.

Agenda

Insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea: Assessing the Threats, Preparing the Response

New York, NY

Thursday, June 6, 2013

9:25 – 9:30 **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Ambassador John L. Hirsch, *Senior Adviser, International Peace Institute*
H.E. Mr. Tété António, *Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations*

9:30 – 11:00 **Session 1 – Current and Emerging Peace and Security Threats in the Gulf of Guinea**
What are the key drivers of instability in the Gulf of Guinea? How have these been impacted by recent events in the Sahel and North Africa? What potential exists for further destabilization? How have weak governance, maritime insecurity, and transnational organized crime exacerbated the challenges faced by the subregion?

Chair

Ambassador John L. Hirsch, *Senior Adviser, International Peace Institute*

Speakers

General Patrice Sartre (retired), *consultant and author of a forthcoming IPI research paper on the Gulf of Guinea*
Ambassador Florentina Adenike Ukonga, *Deputy Executive Secretary (Political Affairs), Gulf of Guinea Commission*
Ambassador Joseph Mutaboba, *former SRSG for Guinea-Bissau and Head, United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea Bissau (UNOGBIS)*

11:00 – 11:15 Coffee Break

11:15 – 12:30 **Session 2 – National, Regional, and International Responses**
What are the main elements of the strategies developed by the key subregional, regional, and international actors, namely the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, and the United Nations, to address the challenges of the Gulf of Guinea? What are their possible overlaps and respective specificities? How effective are the strategies currently being implemented? What are the implementation gaps and how can they be addressed?

Speakers

H.E. Mr. Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou, *Permanent Representative of the Republic of Benin to the United Nations*
Ambassador Florentina Adenike Ukonga, *Deputy Executive Secretary (Political Affairs), Gulf of Guinea Commission*
Ms. Jacqueline Seck, *Political Affairs Officer and Team Leader for Central Africa, United Nations Department of Political Affairs*

12:30 – 13:00 **Closing Remarks**

Dr. Youssef Mahmoud, *Senior Adviser, International Peace Institute*

Participants

Dr. Mireille Affa'a Mindzie
International Peace Institute

Mr. David Avital
Israel Policy Forum

Mr. Jerreh Badjie

Ms. Salma Berrada
International Crisis Group

Ms. Fiona Blyth
International Peace Institute

Mr. Arthur Boutellis
International Peace Institute

Mr. Charles Cater
Security Council Report

Ms. Yvonne K. Clinton
Liberian International Ship and Corporate
Registry (LISCR, LLC, New York)

Ms. Emanuela Curnis
Permanent Mission of Italy to the
United Nations

Mr. Aleksas Dambrauskas
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Lithuania
to the United Nations

Ms. Mariska de Blok
Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the
Netherlands to the United Nations

Ms. Kara L. DeDonato
Permanent Observer Mission of the Sovereign
Military Order of Malta to the United Nations

Mr. Fernando Hesse
United Nations Office for the Coordination of
Humanitarian Affairs

Mr. Udo Janz
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Ms. Ana Jiménez
Permanent Mission of Spain to the
United Nations

Ms. Anne Junius
Permanent Mission of France to the
United Nations

Mr. Ralph Kader
United Federation for Middle East Peace

Ms. Sally Kader
United Federation for Middle East Peace

Ms. Nao Kawaguchi
Permanent Mission of Japan to the
United Nations

Mr. Walter Kemp
International Peace Institute

Mr. Volker Lehmann
Friedrich Ebert Foundation

Mr. Eric Lord
United Nations Department of Peacekeeping
Operations

Ms. Jette Michelsen
Permanent Mission of Denmark to the
United Nations

Mr. Terry Nunn
Permanent Mission of Australia to the
United Nations

Mr. Cyril Obi
Social Science Research Council

Ms. Marie O'Reilly
International Peace Institute

Ms. Ann Phillips
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Ms. Anne Schintgen
Permanent Mission of Luxembourg to the
United Nations

Mr. Robert Schupp
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Ms. Taimi Strehlow
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Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies

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to the United Nations

Ms. Josiane Toundzi
Femmes Africa Solidarité

Mr. Mohamed Yahya
United Nations Development Programme

Ms. Chang Yu

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