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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Council Conclusions on the Gulf of Guinea

At its meeting on 17 March 2014, the Council adopted the Council conclusions set out in the Annex to this note.

Council Conclusions on the Gulf of Guinea

1. Recognising the importance of its relations with West and Central Africa, the Council has today adopted a Strategy on the Gulf of Guinea, drawing on a Joint Communication¹ of the Commission and the High Representative, to support the efforts of the region and its coastal states to address the many challenges of maritime insecurity and organised crime. The adoption of a strategy on the Gulf of Guinea underlines, in a timely manner ahead of the EU-Africa Summit in April 2014, the importance which the EU attaches to close and comprehensive cooperation with its African partners.

2. The EU's comprehensive approach to West and Central Africa is based on the region's geo-strategic importance and the EU's long-standing determination to support its efforts to overcome poverty and attain lasting stability and prosperity. Piracy, Armed Robbery At Sea, Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU) including environmental degradation and challenges to food security and organised crime including smuggling of migrants and trafficking of human beings, drugs and arms in the Gulf of Guinea pose serious challenges to human security and human rights, economic activity and trade both at sea and on land. Furthermore, links to transnational organised criminal and terrorist networks threaten stability in the wider sub-region and impact the security of Europe and its citizens.

¹ doc. 18099/13.

3. The EU Strategy builds upon the momentum which was created by the Heads of State of the region at their Summit in Yaoundé, Cameroon in June 2013, and aims to provide the support of the EU particularly to the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC). This regional ownership is essential to achieve lasting peace, security, justice and good governance based on the democratic principles of inclusion, the rule of law and respect for human rights. The Strategy also recognises the need to protect both the populations in the Gulf of Guinea region and European citizens from the threats that emanate from the region, including piracy, terrorism, smuggling of migrants and trafficking of human beings, drugs, and arms.
4. The EU recognises the importance of addressing the underlying causes and contributing factors, including poverty and weak governance. Although circumstances vary from region to region, the EU's experience in dealing with insecurity in the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, and the Great Lakes, indicates the appropriateness and effectiveness of preventive action in close coordination with other international partners and in support of the efforts of the countries of the region and African regional bodies. It particularly shows the value of integrating all EU means and instruments - political, security, sustainable development and fisheries, good governance and anti-corruption - in a comprehensive approach for greater impact.
5. The EU will advance work to seek to enhance the capacity of the regional organisations and coastal states to build a common understanding of the threats, strengthen their institutions to ensure security and the rule of law, human rights, and accelerate development including job creation, and build cooperation structures to take the necessary actions at sea and on land. This strategic approach should also increase the level of coordination among the EU and its Member States in the region.

6. The Strategy, in Annex, sets out the EU's strategic approach, in partnership with the region itself and in close cooperation with key international partners. The Council invites the EEAS and the Commission in consultation with Member States to develop an Action Plan to deliver the Strategy, in synergy with the future EU Maritime Security Strategy and mindful of the principles of the EU comprehensive approach, and to report back annually on progress with its implementation. It also invites the High Representative to appoint a Senior Coordinator for the Gulf of Guinea who will oversee the implementation of the Strategy and its Action Plan.
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EU Strategy on the Gulf of Guinea

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

States bordering the Gulf of Guinea coastline face many of the challenges familiar to countries throughout Africa. But the recent increased focus on threats emanating from the lack of control over the coastal waters and the weak control over access and security along the coast itself pose a particular challenge to the states of the region². The consequences include growth in criminal and terrorist activity, which also pose a growing threat to the European Union (EU).

During the Summit of Gulf of Guinea Heads of State in Yaoundé on 24-25 June 2013, member states of the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) showed their determination to face these challenges through a common regional approach: the 'Code of Conduct Concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery Against Ships and Illicit Activity in West and Central Africa', in line with UN Security Council resolutions 2018 and 2039. The EU should support African leadership and the implementation of the Code.

This EU Strategy reviews the overall scale of the threat and the risks posed to the coastal states and the EU. It defines potential actions that the EU, through a comprehensive approach in support of the action of the region itself and in coordination with international partners, can take to help those states and regional organisations tackle the problem.

² Including the many neighbouring landlocked countries whose supplies depend on coastal economic activities.

Scope

The geographic scope of this Strategy covers the 6.000 km coastline from Senegal to Angola including the islands of Cape Verde and Sao Tome and Principe, covering two geographical, political and economic regions: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), both of which are affiliated to the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) and the African Union (AU).

Threats

The threats take various forms, are often interlinked across borders and can, collectively, lead to contagious criminal activity and linkages with terrorist networks, putting at risk the stability of states and reducing their chances of successful economic development or of reducing poverty, to which the EU is committed. The main threats include:

- a) illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, illicit dumping of waste, and piracy and armed robbery at sea³, including kidnap
- b) trafficking of human beings, narcotics, arms and counterfeit goods, and smuggling of migrants
- c) oil theft ("illegal bunkering"), and criminal acts in ports.

³ International law differentiates between "piracy" – incidents which take place in international waters – and "armed robbery at sea" – incidents which take place in territorial waters.

Shared African and European interests

The EU's overriding objective is to help the states of the region to achieve peace, security and prosperity through the successful and legitimate development of their economies and their institutions, in line with the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA); building political consensus, enabling and respecting African ownership and synchronising existing programmes in a comprehensive approach to regional development and security. The EU's commitment to address poverty and support economic development is enshrined in the Cotonou Agreement. Experience in dealing with insecurity elsewhere in Africa, particularly in the Horn of Africa, the Sahel and the Great Lakes, suggests that early preventive action, in close coordination with the countries of the region and African regional bodies, is much more cost-effective than a later cure. That experience has also demonstrated the value of integrating all aspects for greater cumulative effect; political, good-governance/anti-corruption, security, institutional, economic, and development.

The EU and the countries of the region have major common economic, developmental, commercial and security interests. The region has a long coast line, and is rich in resources which are crucial both for local employment and consumption, and for trade with Europe. Maritime trade to and from the Gulf of Guinea is largely conducted by the EU. There is an average of 30 EU flagged or owned vessels at any one time in the Gulf of Guinea. The sustainability of all maritime resources, including fisheries, is a key concern for local communities as well as European customers. Secure global shipping lanes are necessary for commerce and trouble-free fishing.

The EU is also committed to supporting the sustainable exploitation of natural resources in the region, including hydrocarbons. Europe imports about half of its energy needs, of which nearly 10% of its oil and 4% of its natural gas come from the Gulf of Guinea. Nigeria, Angola, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon are significant suppliers of crude oil, and Nigeria of natural gas. The region's proximity to Europe with easy sea access gives it a comparative advantage over the Middle East for our oil needs and Europe remains a primary export market for other regional products, including forestry, agricultural and mineral resources⁴. Narcotics and other illegal goods trafficked along the coast and across land borders are increasingly damaging local communities and fuel problems in Europe.

Yet the region is an increasing magnet for European investment, not only in the natural resources but in the consumer goods and services sectors, including mobile telephony. That combines with a growing importance as a potential market for exports as the region's economic growth accelerates. All this makes for a growing mutual interest in a partnership to promote growth and jobs by ensuring security and stability. It is equally in the EU's interests to promote stability in the Gulf of Guinea to protect the EU's own citizens from the threats of drugs, terrorism, piracy and armed robbery, and other forms of crime emanating from the region.

⁴ Examples include iron ore (Nigeria, Gabon and Cameroon), diamonds (Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone), manganese (Gabon), bauxite (Guinea), cobalt and timber (Cameroon) and cocoa (Ghana, Ivory Coast).

Given the significant shared interests, the EU wants to build on the regional momentum that was created at the Yaoundé Summit of June 2013 and provide appropriate support to regional organisations (ECOWAS, ECCAS, GGC) as well as to individual states to help them design effective strategies to tackle the challenges and implement them in a coordinated manner, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

Response

The EU can mitigate the risks identified above by helping states to strengthen their maritime capabilities, the rule of law and effective governance across the region, including improvements in maritime administration and law enforcement through multiagency cooperation by police, navy, military, coastguard, customs and immigration services.

As maritime boundaries are still not fully delineated and inherently hard to police and entirely permeable, strengthening cooperation between the coastal states and nascent regional coordination mechanisms is an essential starting point. The EU can also support countries in the region to deliver on their international obligations as flag and coastal states.

It is therefore proposed that the EU and its Member States, working in coordination with local and international partners, adopt a comprehensive approach focusing on four specific objectives:

1. Building a common understanding of the scale of the threat in the Gulf of Guinea and the need to address it among the countries in the region and the international community.
2. Helping governments of the region build robust institutions, maritime administrations and multiagency capabilities to ensure maritime awareness, security and the rule of law along the coast.
3. Supporting prosperous economies in this region in line with national and regional development strategies, to create employment and assist vulnerable communities to build resilience and resist criminal or violent activities.

4. Strengthening cooperation structures between the countries of the region and the regional organisations to take the necessary actions to mitigate the threats at sea and on land.

THE NATURE AND EVOLUTION OF THE THREAT

Over the last decade, West and Central African states have experienced a mix of dynamic economic growth together with a strengthening of governance in some countries and a weakening of it in others. Some of the countries are securely on the path to middle income status, while others still have a way to go to reduce poverty in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Yet, both could be threatened by growing instability and criminal activity in the Gulf of Guinea; and instability or economic disruption there will have a direct impact on the EU itself.

Organised crime in the forms of trafficking of drugs, human beings, arms, rough diamonds, counterfeit medicines, illegal waste⁵, cybercrime and related money-laundering often take place in the interface between the porous land and sea borders in the Gulf of Guinea. Trafficking routes often overlap with areas of instability and crisis, and with terrorism in the Sahel and northern Nigeria. Trafficking of drugs, particularly cocaine, and arms⁶ has played a significant role in weakening governance institutions in several countries of West Africa, most notably in Guinea Bissau. In some cases this activity has become an extra source of revenue for terrorist groups in the Sahel. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates the value of cocaine shipped from West Africa to Europe in 2011 alone, as USD 1.25 billion, and the bulk of illegal migrants, whether trafficked or not, are bound for Europe. Other illegal trafficking involves cocoa, cotton, timber, cashew nuts, gold and diamonds⁷.

⁵ Examples of illegal waste include herbicides and pesticides, oil spill, untreated industrial wastes including nuclear and aerosol contaminants.

⁶ 5-7 million Small Arms and Light Weapons are estimated by UNODC to be in circulation in the Gulf of Guinea region.

⁷ Diamonds have contributed to the fuelling of conflict in the region, which led to the establishment of the Kimberley Process (KP) Certificate Scheme to stop conflict diamonds reaching international markets.

Piracy and Armed Robbery at Sea is a second threat. Over the last decade, of the 551 attacks and attempted attacks that have been reported, most took place in national jurisdictions, while fewer than 20% took place in international waters, with the largest number occurring off the coasts of Nigeria. In 2013, according to the International Maritime Bureau Piracy reporting Center, of 234 reported incidents worldwide, 30 took place off the coast of Nigeria, including 2 hijackings⁸. These attacks occur mainly when ships are moored, bound for, or leaving offshore oil platforms, storage vessels and ports. However, latest assessments are that the risk of attack could shift further from the coast. The unpredictable use of violence against crews, including use of guns, and the hijacking of tankers for fuel theft or "petro-piracy", are worrying trends.

Oil theft or illegal "bunkering" of oil was recently estimated to lose Nigeria around 100,000 barrels a day, which is then re-sold on the black market. Oil is generally stolen from on-shore pipelines and transported in small, difficult to track barges. Tugs ferrying oil workers to rigs have also been targeted by pirates and armed bandits. These activities cost governments revenue, increase commercial security costs and discourage further investment. The security of the petroleum and petrochemical industry is important not just in Nigeria (at the epicentre up to now), but increasingly further afield, off the coast of Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Gabon, Chad, Liberia and Angola⁹. Oil spills linked to oil theft often also exacerbate the damage to coastal environments and therefore fishing and agricultural livelihoods.

⁸ To be compared with 13 incidents including 2 hijacking off the coast of Somalia recorded in 2013.

⁹ European Parliament report Aug 2011, PE 433.768: "The Effects of Oil Companies' Activities on the Environment, Health and Development in Sub-Saharan Africa" focuses on lessons from Angola and Nigeria.

Illegal fishing: Fishing remains an important industry in many countries in the Gulf of Guinea, supporting about 7% of the working population of Ghana; contributing from 25 to 30% of Senegal's exports; and 25-40% of government revenue in Guinea Bissau according to the World Bank and Food and Agriculture Organisation¹⁰. Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU) in the Gulf of Guinea is costing coastal states around USD 350 million a year, and is posing a serious environmental threat to fish stocks and the potential overall collapse of the fishing industry. Total estimated catches in the Gulf of Guinea coastline are believed to be up to 40% higher than reported.

Significant resources, revenue, nutrition¹¹ and livelihoods are lost as a result. The IUU fishing threat to sustainable fish stock levels not only threatens local trade, markets and jobs but also has wider ramifications for Europe and beyond through increasing migration pressures as the development and prosperity of coastal communities decline.

Unemployment in countries in the Gulf of Guinea is estimated at around 40% with levels of youth unemployment at over 60%. There are insufficient economic opportunities in the formal, legal economy for young people. In addition, food insecurity in the countryside has encouraged migration from rural areas to cities, leading to rapid urban population growth, stretching already struggling social and economic infrastructure and creating tensions amongst urban populations. Such a high level of unemployment encourages young people into criminal activity simply to make a living, so that they become foot-soldiers for pirate and criminal gangs, or leads them into illegal migration in very dangerous conditions.

¹⁰ World Bank West Africa Regional Fisheries project report 2008; FAO Fishery Country Profiles 2007.

¹¹ According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation fish provides up to 50% of the required animal protein intake for several countries.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE

The responses to these threats in recent years have included a range of initiatives at international, regional and national levels:

- Two **UN Security Council resolutions** on Piracy and Armed Robbery in the Gulf of Guinea¹² initiated by Benin and Togo, set-out the need for adopting “a comprehensive approach led by the countries of the region to counter the threat of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea and their underlying causes”; and the need to build on “existing national, regional and extra-regional initiatives to enhance maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea”. Both resolutions focus on promoting the maintenance of peace and stability in general in the Gulf of Guinea region and encourage international partners to enhance the counter-piracy capabilities of regional states and organisations in order to enable them to prevent and counter piracy and armed robbery effectively.
- **Regional Organisations ECOWAS and ECCAS** have adopted policies and launched specific actions, mainly as a result of both increasing international pressure and international support, including for ECOWAS a comprehensive Conflict Prevention Framework in 2008 addressing inter alia cross border and maritime security issues, a landmark Praia Plan to address the growing drugs problem, and a Counter Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan. ECOWAS is developing an ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Strategy (EIMS) and a draft version is due to be agreed by Heads of State in 2014. ECCAS has an Integrated Strategy for Maritime Security since 2008 and set up the CRESMAC (Regional Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa).
- **The Summit of Gulf of Guinea Heads of State** held in Yaoundé on 24-25 June 2013 has led to:

¹² UNSCR (2011) 2018 and (2012) 2039 emphasised the importance of supporting partner countries and regional organisations, through providing training, advice, equipment and resources where appropriate, so that they can increasingly prevent or manage crises by themselves.

- a) The Adoption of a 'Code of Conduct Concerning the Prevention and Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships, and Illegal Maritime Activities in West and Central Africa' which will be reviewed in 3 years ¹³.
- b) The Adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the ECCAS, ECOWAS and GGC Heads on Maritime Safety and Security in West and Central Africa, setting out the establishment of an experts group to prepare a follow-up action plan for implementation of the Code of Conduct.
- c) Decision to locate the Intra-regional Coordination Centre (as outlined in the MoU) in Douala, Cameroon. This will be the regions' mechanism to oversee implementation.
- d) Since the Yaoundé Summit, ECOWAS, ECCAS and the GGC are working to set-up an interregional working group to establish the details of implementation and how this should be funded. Part of this work will be signing agreements between regional States for joint patrols, for example, Benin, Togo and Nigeria have signed a “Zone E” Agreement under the EIMS. In addition, the group will determine the role and structure of the Intra-regional Coordination Centre in Douala.

¹³ The Code is inspired by the IMO Djibouti Code of Conduct for the Western Indian Ocean. Its main features are a particular emphasis on information sharing and coordination, facilitated by a designated national contact point in each State, and a number of regional transnational and trans-regional maritime security coordination centres; and clear engagement by States to declare their exclusive economic zones and enforce their own laws, including on fishing, piracy and armed robbery at sea, environmental protection, waste dumping and mineral resources including oil. The Code is kept under ECCAS, ECOWAS and GGC auspices for greater African ownership. The Code is non-binding for now.

- The **African Union** adopted an African Integrated Maritime Security Strategy (2050 AIM Strategy) in January 2014.
- **The International Maritime Organisation** (IMO) is conducting an ongoing programme of table top exercises aimed at promoting the development of national maritime security committees pursuant to the Yaounde Code of Conduct. In addition to the ongoing work of its own committees on maritime security the IMO adopted in late 2013 a Resolution on the Gulf of Guinea¹⁴.
- **Individual countries** in the Gulf of Guinea have begun to increase resources and develop strategies in partnership to address organised crime both offshore and on land such as the joint patrols (Operation Prosperity) by the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Republic of Benin.
- **EU Member States** have increased their support by implementing or reinforcing bilateral and regional programmes. Their support is already very substantial, notably as regards capacity building of key institutions and services¹⁵.
- **The European Union** is addressing illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing through the implementation of the IUU Regulation and through EU Fishery Partnership Agreements with many of the coastal countries of West and Central Africa. These help to regulate fishing, including by EU vessels, and support development and improved governance in the fishing sector.

¹⁴ The Resolution on the prevention and suppression of piracy, armed robbery against ships and illicit maritime activity in the Gulf of Guinea covers all the IMO's activities in the region and how it intends to strengthen its cooperation with MOWCA – e.g. through establishing a subregional integrated coastguard network in West & Central Africa, and address threats and challenges onshore and offshore in a holistic, comprehensive manner.

¹⁵ For example France maintains a permanent naval presence in the Gulf of Guinea with its mission “CORYMBE”, implemented in 2011 the “ASECMAR” project, dedicated to the reinforcement of maritime security administrations in the region.

- The EU continues to support the socio-economic development of the Gulf of Guinea countries, through their bilateral and regional cooperation. The support provided is consistent with the national development policies of the beneficiary countries and integrates the regional dimension. The support includes at the same time state building and reinforcement, economic growth and poverty reduction in all its aspects.
- The EU “Critical Maritime Routes” programme (CRIMGO) is beginning to reinforce regional and international initiatives against piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea¹⁶. Its main components are: (a) setting-up a regional maritime security and safety training function, (b) starting a regional maritime information-sharing function, (c) improving coast guard work (maritime law enforcement), and (d) developing a joint operational coordination capacity through common exercises or pilot operations. Its continuous review procedures will facilitate any necessary adaptation.
- **Other international partners** such as the United States¹⁷ (US), Brazil, China, India, South Africa, have set up bilateral programmes for policy formulation, coordination and institutional capacity building.
- **The G8++ Friends of the Gulf of Guinea Group** (G8++FOGG), of which the EU is a member, has been established to better co-ordinate the maritime capacity building efforts of international partners in the Gulf of Guinea. It focuses on the importance of African ownership; the link between economic development and security; the importance of coordination and exchange of information; and the need for a comprehensive response including governance and justice.

In terms of defining the strategic requirements and necessary policies, much work has therefore been done. Implementation, however, has been severely limited by resource constraints, and the gap with the level of further investment needed to reverse the rising trend of organised crime, remains wide.

¹⁶ In Benin, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe and Togo.

¹⁷ In particular the US AFRICOM "African Partnership Station" (APS).

THE WAY FORWARD

The Yaoundé Summit signalled a firm commitment from individual states and the regional organisations to work together and with international partners to develop regional maritime security in its widest sense. Follow-up to this Summit is therefore a useful starting point for the EU's approach. This strategy should also be seen in the context of the future EU Maritime Security Strategy¹⁸, which promotes a similar cross-sectoral¹⁹ approach to establish opportunities for cooperation. The EU's approach should be based on three principles:

- partnership with the countries of the Gulf of Guinea and close coordination with their regional organisations and other international organisations active in the region (ECOWAS, ECCAS, GGC, Maritime Organisation for West and Central Africa (MOWCA), plus UN Offices for Central and for West Africa and on Drugs and Crime, (UNOCA, UNOWA and UNODC), and international organisations including the AU, UN agencies such as International Maritime Organisation (IMO), as well as INTERPOL, World Customs Organisation (WCO) and others);
- a comprehensive approach to the problems, ensuring that security, development and governance issues are integrated into a single strategic framework.
- applying the lessons learnt from our strategies in other regions of Africa, especially in the Horn of Africa.

¹⁸ Expected adoption in June 2014.

¹⁹ Between civil society, private, public, including military and law enforcement sectors.

The EU will take an integrated approach to governance issues and all security risks and challenges on land and sea, addressing all aspects of transnational organised crime in the maritime domain as set out in the Code of Conduct signed in Yaoundé, tackling the underlying causes, and promoting regional peace, security, stability, good governance and development. Supporting border management, the rule of law, reforming legal and security frameworks, ensuring access to justice and human rights, fighting corruption and organised crime including illegal migration, are essential components of the long term work ahead. Economic governance is also key, such as better management and societal participation in the exploitation of natural resources, including oil, fisheries and others.

Another important element will be to build on existing successful EU actions, learning the lessons of the EU Sahel and Horn of Africa strategies. While there are differences between the situations in the Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Guinea, certain lessons are still relevant: effective combination of naval patrols and merchant industry self-protection measures to repress and deter piracy and armed robbery at sea; importance of information-sharing and cooperation between the International Community and regional governments and the private sector; the key role of political dialogue on security and conflict prevention; the central issue of good governance; the relevance of the comprehensive approach, but also of the need to carefully plan the many instruments; and – from the Sahel Strategy – the mutually reinforcing effect of actions in the fields of development, security, peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

It will also be necessary, as elsewhere, to work at national, regional and international levels with individual or groups of States which have the political will to act - and encouraging others to join - to prioritise and maximise the complementarity of actions for greater effectiveness.

Bearing that in mind, and avoiding any overlap with already existing Member States projects in the region, the EU approach will focus on the following four objectives:

Objective 1 – *Building a common understanding of the scale of the threat in the Gulf of Guinea and the need to address it among the countries in the region and the international community.*

The aim is to develop a sound, factual basis for policy-making and action, promote a sense of ownership among African countries, and encourage the political will to tackle the problems. It will also enable the EU to judge better the cost and benefit of actions proposed.

Cooperation with key stakeholders in countries and regional organisations, including civil society organisations, United Nations agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) and the private sector, will make it possible to define a comprehensive picture of the scale of the threat, identify opportunities and agree priorities.

Possible action:

- improve data collection (many maritime incidents often still go unreported) and information sharing;
- develop analytical tools to better understand the political economy in environments affected by transnational criminal activities. This analysis should help political and development actors identify entry points to mobilise the necessary political will to tackle existing threats;
- identify geographic and thematic priority zones to focus the EU response, including in cooperation with other international actors;

- address the wider drivers of instability according to the level of risk using tools such as the Conflict Early Warning System and Conflict Risk Assessments, political economy analysis, and EU Human Rights strategies;
- ensure alignment of thematic (security, trafficking of drugs and human beings, smuggling of migrants, and counter-terrorism) and geographical policies/strategies;
- maintain close links and organised consultations with the private sector, notably shipping companies, industrial, artisanal fisheries and mining sectors, to ensure their perspectives are taken into account by governments;
- support dialogue with civil society, industry and governments to better understand the local context. In parallel, also support dialogue with international partners active in the region (like the US and China) to better coordinate efforts and avoid duplication.

Objective 2 – *Helping regional governments put in place the institutions and capabilities to ensure security and the rule of law.*

Resilient national and regional institutions able to counter the threats on a sustainable basis are essential for an effective, multiagency fight against organised criminal networks. These institutions need to have the will to counter criminality, the mandate and resources to do so, as well as the technical capability, including in specialist areas. The EU has the experience and resources to help build local capacity, and should encourage the necessary political support through political dialogue.

The institutions include:

- regional Institutions and mechanisms, in particular the Intra-regional Coordination Centre (as outlined in the MoU signed by the ECCAS, ECOWAS and GGC Heads on Maritime Safety and Security in West and Central Africa) to which the EU can offer technical assistance and support;
- political institutions (for example parliaments, election management bodies, political parties) that can provide other institutions with a mandate to intervene and an appropriate legal framework to do so;
- security institutions (for example internal security forces, coastguards, port authorities, customs authorities and military – land, sea and air forces, all with associated intelligence gathering functions) that can conduct surveillance operations and where necessary, intervene to protect trade routes, oil installations and disrupt illegal activities such as drug and human trafficking and smuggling of migrants. A suitable legal framework and political accountability need to be in place to ensure clear responsibilities in relation to serious crimes on land or sea. Capacity reinforcement is needed in specific areas where they are weakest (for example countering piracy at sea, or detecting drugs);
- rule of law institutions (for example police, courts and prisons, including specialised tribunals for example in the areas of customs or fishing) that can a) enable suspects to be investigated, tried and suitably punished according to law and with respect for human rights standards; b) facilitate access to justice and human rights protection (also for victims of human trafficking); to promote judiciary and home affairs reform. Some key dimensions here are the independence and protection of judges and investigating magistrates, forensic capacity to provide evidence in court and reduce the use of illegal interrogation methods;

- economic and environmental management institutions: national authorities need to reduce corruption where it exists, prevent money-laundering through national financial institutions, avoid corrupt or incompetent management of natural resources contracts, and ensure sound environmental management by commercial operations;
- oversight institutions and civil society (for example auditor general, ombudsman, anti-corruption institutions, media, NGOs, think tanks, community groups) that can encourage good governance and rule of law to counter the enabling space for organised criminal networks to operate in.

The EU should seek to engage with the local communities, civil society and media to help citizens hold these institutions accountable.

Possible action:

- to improve the rule of law through strengthening national law enforcement agencies and the judiciary; improving sea and land capacity; supporting enhanced interagency and regional coordination in the fight against drugs and organised crime including security and legal cooperation, data sharing, and cross-border anti-trafficking joint actions²⁰; supporting the implementation of the 2050 Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy and improving monitoring and reporting of maritime security breaches, including collection of evidence for prosecution. Such support should take account of previous experience. The use of all EU instruments (including CSDP), should be explored as part of a comprehensive approach;

²⁰ For example the Intra-Regional Coordination Centre between ECOWAS, ECCAS and GGC on Maritime Safety and Security

- to improve economic and environmental governance through development or enforcement of legal frameworks for fishing and offshore mineral exploitation, including fish licensing systems; working with international organisations, Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, and other key bodies in ensuring respect for international law and regional norms; working with the private sector – including oil and maritime industry to promote corporate responsibility actions and consultation with civil society and local communities;
- to support closer coordination and increased synergies and coherence between the EU and its Member States and the countries in the region.

Objective 3 – *Supporting the development of prosperous economies in the coastal countries, enabling them to provide basic services, employment opportunities and poverty reduction for their citizens.*

Many States of the Gulf of Guinea are fragile Least Developed Countries (LDCs), with low key development indicators such as life expectancy, health and literacy. Widespread poverty, poor governance and under-development can facilitate the emergence of criminal activities. Generating legitimate and sustainable jobs for young people could help tackle some of the underlying causes feeding insecurity in many Gulf of Guinea countries.

EU development policy, including the EU's Agenda for Change, prioritises assistance to the poorest countries, particularly fragile states. Key issues addressed in the Agenda for Change include good governance, inclusive and sustainable growth, agriculture, food security, clean energy, and improving resilience to the consequences of climate change. In terms of nutrition, trade, economic development and employment, the importance for the region of improvements to the management of the fisheries sector, notably artisanal coastal fishing, is evident.²¹

²¹ For the EU there are also considerable potential gains from strengthening local capacities to conserve and manage fish stocks, in the form of improved perspectives for EU fishing fleets and increased security of maritime routes due to better local surveillance.

Possible action

- continue and extend the ongoing work to improve regulation and management of key industries in Gulf of Guinea countries including fishing and extractives;
- support the development of secure and modern infrastructures, including ports;
- increase community participation in local economic development and support communities through expansion of access to energy and basic services;
- engage with Gulf of Guinea countries, Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, International Organisations and other key stakeholders to improve regulation and management of fisheries and extractive industries;
- promote a stronger and sustained focus on job creation.

Objective 4 – *Strengthening cooperation structures between the countries of the region to ensure effective action across borders at sea and on land.*

The importance of information sharing and cooperation among a wide range of agencies and actors, public and private²², makes it essential to build strong planning and coordination among them, notably with the key regional organisations; ECOWAS, ECCAS and GGC. The broader coordinating role of the African Union has proven its value in the Horn of Africa and is increasingly appreciated by the regional organisations in the Gulf of Guinea. EU cooperation needs to support this integration and coordination of effort.

²² An example of the commitment of the private sector is the Maritime Trade Information Sharing Centre for the Gulf of Guinea. This initiative focuses on the creation of an affordable, sustainable and enduring regional maritime information sharing center and complements regional and national initiatives to counter maritime crime by providing a real-time connection with industry and passing information which will assist with delivering a targeted response.

Possible Action:

- improve planning, coordination and communication amongst regional partners; help regional organisations work more collaboratively in follow-up to the Yaoundé Summit;
- identify where active partners like the US, Russia, Canada, Japan, Australia, China, Brazil, as well as the UN, World Bank, and other multi-lateral organisations/institutions can have a positive impact, including the Gulf of Guinea in our political dialogue with these partners;
- EU Political Dialogues with the States and the Regional Organisations and other regional bodies should regularly assess the security at sea and on land as well as the development situation, trends and needs;
- support ECOWAS, ECCAS, GGC and the African Union in their efforts to coordinate internally, with their Member States and with each other, and with external partners, including where possible through the secondment of EU experts/advisers from various professional fields with expertise in security;
- harness EU experience of having successfully contributed to the work of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, to support the coordination and cooperation efforts of ECOWAS, ECCAS and the GGC.

CONCLUSIONS

Although some promising steps have been taken nationally, regionally and internationally, the scale, variety and shifting nature of criminal activities and the complexity of the underlying problems require much more attention at national, regional and international levels. Actions in the region, within the framework of this Strategy, are consistent with and complementary to national poverty reduction policies and regional initiatives, as well as in synergy with actions implemented through the Fisheries Partnership Agreements and actions implementing the IUU Regulation. It is clear that activity across the different objectives as set out in this framework can be mutually reinforcing and complementary.

It will be important however to coordinate all these different initiatives both in the region and amongst the EU and its Member States as well as the international community. Our level of ambition, albeit broad and encompassing the full range of economic, social, governance, security and development challenges, is the right approach at this stage.

It will be wise to concentrate where the EU can have the most effect. Post-Yaoundé there is an opportunity to lever support to the regional African-led coordinating platforms that are developing.

Ultimately, this strategic framework will allow us to better judge and plan the EU's work with its partners in the Gulf of Guinea in a more coherent way. Increasing the EU's focus now on coordinating better will have significant effects on security, investor confidence, prosperity, livelihoods, the environment, and energy supplies.

