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From:	Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Ms Martine DEPREZ, Director
To:	Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union

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EUROPEAN  
COMMISSION

HIGH REPRESENTATIVE  
OF THE UNION FOR  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND  
SECURITY POLICY

Brussels, 10.3.2023  
JOIN(2023) 8 final

**JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE  
COUNCIL**

**on the update of the EU Maritime Security Strategy and its Action Plan  
"An enhanced EU Maritime Security Strategy for evolving maritime threats"**

## I. INTRODUCTION

**Maritime security is vital to the European Union (EU) and to its Member States.** Together, the EU's Member States form the largest combined exclusive economic zone in the world. The EU economy depends greatly on safe and secure oceans: over 80% of global trade is seaborne, about two-thirds of the world's oil and gas supply is either extracted at sea or transported by sea<sup>1</sup>, and up to 99% of global data flows are transmitted through undersea cables<sup>2</sup>. To ensure effective ocean governance, to protect our oceans and seabeds, and to unlock the full potential of the sustainable blue economy<sup>3</sup>, the global maritime domain must be secure.

Since 2014, the European maritime security strategy (EUMSS) and action plan<sup>4</sup> have provided the framework for addressing security challenges at sea. The strategy has stimulated closer cooperation between civilian and military authorities, in particular through information exchange. It has helped promote rules-based governance at sea and has given a boost to international cooperation. It has strengthened the EU's autonomy and capacity to respond to maritime security threats<sup>5</sup>.

The EU plays an increasingly important role as a global maritime security provider, by conducting its own naval operations, e.g. Atalanta<sup>6</sup> and Irini<sup>7</sup>, implementing the Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP)<sup>8</sup> concept, and promoting maritime situational awareness and cooperating with a wide range of external partners. In addition, the Copernicus maritime and border surveillance operational systems, implemented by the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), provide space-based observations, complementing the navigation services of Galileo satellites.

The overall strategic environment is experiencing drastic changes. Reshaped by the climate crisis and environmental degradation and aggravated by Russia's illegal and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine, it demands more action from the EU as an international security provider.

In line with the EU Strategic Compass for Security and Defence,<sup>9</sup> this update of the EUMSS and its action plan aims to respond to the new challenges. It is an opportunity to drive forward sustainable solutions to maritime security problems. It is also an opportunity to further enhance the EU's role internationally and further secure the EU's access to an increasingly contested maritime domain.

The updated EUMSS is a framework for the EU to take further action to protect its interests at sea, and to protect its citizens, values and economy. The aim is to promote international peace and security while adhering to the principle of sustainability and protecting biodiversity. The EU and its Member States will implement the updated strategy, in line with their respective competences.

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<sup>1</sup> JOIN(2022)28 final

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2022/702557/EXPO\\_IDA\(2022\)702557\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2022/702557/EXPO_IDA(2022)702557_EN.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> COM(2021) 240 final.

<sup>4</sup> Council document 11205/14 and Council conclusions 10494/18.

<sup>5</sup> Council conclusions 9946/21.

<sup>6</sup> <https://eunavfor.eu/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.operationirini.eu/>

<sup>8</sup> Council Conclusions 06256/22 and 06255/22.

<sup>9</sup> Council document 7371/22.

## II. EVOLVING AND GROWING THREATS TO MARITIME SECURITY

**Much has changed in the global geopolitical context since the European maritime security strategy was adopted in 2014, requiring new and enhanced action.** The EU Threat Analysis demonstrates that the EU is facing an increase in threats and challenges, including in the maritime domain<sup>10</sup>. Strategic competition for power and resources is increasing. Threats are becoming increasingly complex and multi-layered, with some countries seeking to re-define the core tenets of the multilateral order, including through violations of national sovereignty and borders. Russia's military aggression against Ukraine has brought war back to Europe and created new dangers, as well as negative spill-over effects on maritime security and the European economy, impacting European citizens and businesses.

**Maritime security is being challenged in many regions,** including territorial and maritime disputes, competition for natural resources and threats to freedom of navigation and rights of innocent and transit passage. Such challenges create tensions in sea basins around the EU such as the Mediterranean, the Black and the Baltic Seas, exacerbated by Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. There has also been an increase in challenges to maritime security beyond Europe, namely in the Gulf of Guinea, the Gulf of Aden, the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca, and in the South China Sea. Some non-EU countries are increasing their capabilities and assertiveness at sea and are taking unilateral action. This has included the use of force or breaching other countries' national sovereignty. These actions challenge the rule of law and the international order based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The Indo-Pacific region, where the EU has Outermost Regions (Indian Ocean) and Overseas Countries and Territories (Pacific), has become an area of **intense geopolitical competition**. The display of force and increased tensions in regions such as the South and East China Sea and the Taiwan Strait affect global security and have a direct impact on European security and prosperity. Maintaining stability and security along key shipping routes - such as the Malacca and Singapore Straits, the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean - means that the EU and its Member States need to expand their presence and action in these regions, in line with the EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

**Climate change and marine pollution** are expected to have substantial, long-lasting adverse impacts on maritime security. The impacts will include flooding in coastal areas and islands, the loss of coral reefs, mangroves and other wetlands, and the depletion of fish stocks<sup>11</sup>. Climate change and environmental degradation act as risk multipliers by increasing instability and inequality, exacerbating transnational crime, piracy and tensions over marine resources. This requires a new prism allowing the EU to make society more climate-resilient, protect nature and reverse the degradation of ecosystems<sup>12</sup>. Conversely, gaps in maritime security may result in environmental damage, such as hindered access to contaminated sites, diversion of funds from environmental protection or acts of sabotage against maritime infrastructure. In addition, Russia's military aggression against Ukraine has not only caused devastating human and economic impacts, but also a significant loss of biodiversity<sup>13</sup>. It is therefore important to tackle the interactions between

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<sup>10</sup> The EU Threat Analysis is a comprehensive and intelligence-based analysis of the range of threats and challenges the EU is facing or might face in the future. It is regularly updated and serves as background information to help develop and implement the EU Strategic Compass for Security and Defence.

<sup>11</sup> IPCC SROCC (2019) and WGII report, AR6 (2022).

<sup>12</sup> COM(2020) 380 final

<sup>13</sup> Notably, an alarming increase in cetacean mortality in the Black Sea.

climate change, environmental degradation of coastal and maritime areas, and maritime security, including through ongoing and new targeted research.

The 2022 attacks on the Nord Stream pipelines in the Baltic Sea, the presence of unauthorised unmanned vehicles around offshore installations in the North Sea and the recurrent **hybrid and cyber-attacks targeting maritime infrastructure** require the EU to bolster its action and protect its critical infrastructure more effectively, in particular by developing innovative technologies. As the maritime industry undergoes digital transformation, its complexity and potential vulnerabilities have increased. Malicious actors are increasingly likely to use hybrid and cyber means to target maritime infrastructure, including undersea cables and pipelines, as well as ports and ships. The Council Recommendation on a Union-wide coordinated approach to strengthen the resilience of critical infrastructure<sup>14</sup> acknowledges this need for action. Additionally, the Commission recommendation on Union disaster resilience goals set out measures which can contribute to EU's and Member States' better preparedness for and ability to respond to natural and man-made disasters, including at sea<sup>15</sup>.

Threats and illicit activities – such as **piracy and armed robbery at sea, organised crime, including smuggling of migrants and trafficking of human beings, trafficking of arms and narcotics, terrorism, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, other illegal activities, including unauthorised exploration in the exclusive economic zones of EU Member States, and unexploded ordnance (UXO)**<sup>16</sup> at sea – remain equally critical challenges in multiple regions with some coastal areas and remote territories of the EU being particularly vulnerable. Some of these illicit activities may be facilitated by poor port security. Malicious actors may also combine these threats and activities to carry out hybrid attacks against the EU and its Member States.

### III. EU MARITIME SECURITY INTERESTS

In the face of evolving maritime security threats, the EU's fundamental interests are:

- the security of the European Union, its Member States, citizens and partners;
- preserving global peace and stability, and keeping maritime shipping routes free and open;
- upholding international law, in particular UNCLOS as the overarching legal framework governing all activities in the ocean, and promoting sound international ocean governance, including through regional sea conventions, as well as the implementation of the WTO agreement on fisheries subsidies<sup>17</sup>;
- protecting natural resources and the marine environment, and managing the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on maritime security;

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<sup>14</sup> 2023/C 20/01

<sup>15</sup> COM(2023)61 final and 2023/C 56/01.

<sup>16</sup> Unexploded ordnance (UXO) refers to explosive weapons (bombs, shells, grenades, land mines, naval mines, cluster munition, and other munitions) that did not explode and still pose a risk of detonation, sometimes many decades after they were used or discarded.

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/rulesneg\\_e/fish\\_e/fish\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/rulesneg_e/fish_e/fish_e.htm)

- ensuring the resilience and protection of critical maritime infrastructure<sup>18</sup> (onshore and offshore), including by addressing the risks and threats related to climate change, and those that arise from foreign direct investments;
- strengthening the resilience and protection of logistical hubs, i.e. ports, including addressing risks associated with corruption and illicit activities;
- protecting economic activities at sea, thereby contributing to a sustainable blue economy (both onshore and offshore);
- protecting the EU's external borders, and its internal security, to address the smuggling of migrants, trafficking of human beings, and other illegal activities including unauthorised exploration and drilling activities for hydrocarbons;
- ensuring the capacity to act promptly and effectively in the maritime domain, and in other operational domains (i.e. land, air, cyber and outer space);
- ensuring the safety and security of seafarers in line with the requirements of the Maritime Labour Convention and other relevant conventions of the International Labour Organisation..

#### IV. STRENGTHENING THE EU'S RESPONSE

The updated maritime security strategy will help protect EU's interests listed above, from the evolving and growing maritime security threats. To do so, the EU will step up action under six strategic objectives:

- 1. step up activities at sea;**
- 2. cooperate with partners;**
- 3. lead in maritime domain awareness<sup>19</sup>;**
- 4. manage risks and threats;**
- 5. enhance capabilities;**
- 6. educate and train.**

EU action under these strategic objectives will continue to be guided by the principles of the 2014 EUMSS: cross-sectoral approach, functional integrity, respect for international rules – international law, human rights and democracy and full compliance with UNCLOS - and maritime

<sup>18</sup> For example, undersea cables and pipelines, logistical hubs (i.e. ports), offshore renewable energy installations, offshore oil and gas oil platforms, etc.

<sup>19</sup> Maritime domain awareness is the effective understanding of activity associated with the maritime domain that could impact the security, safety, economy, or environment of the European Union and its Member States. On the basis of clearly defined user needs and rights, it assists the authorities responsible for monitoring and surveillance activities in preventing and managing in a comprehensive way all such situations, events and actions related to the EU maritime domain. The EU maritime domain encompasses the EU Member States' Territorial waters, Exclusive Economic Zones and Continental Platforms as defined by the 1982 United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea as well as all maritime-related activities carried out therein, on the seabed, subsurface, surface and above the sea such as installations, cargo, small boats and vessels flagged, owned, managed by or bound to the EU.

multilateralism. The updated EUMSS will be implemented via an Action Plan (**in annex**) and in the framework of the Integrated Approach<sup>20</sup>. To implement the strategy, together with its Member States, the EU will use all relevant civilian and military policies, tools and instruments, and coordinate policies and activities of all relevant players at European, regional and national level, strengthening their synergies and complementarities. The strategy will also promote a more coherent engagement of the EU in external conflicts and crises, to enhance the security of the EU and its citizens.

The updated strategy will feature actions specific to each sea basin around the EU. Action should take account of regional EU strategies<sup>21</sup> and capacity building programmes, as well as cooperation with partner countries.

## 1. Step up activities at sea

The EU Strategic Compass calls for further strengthening the EU's engagement on maritime security. Under the **Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) framework**, Operation Atalanta has been operating in the Western Indian Ocean since 2008. Given its successful track record, Operation Atalanta has seen its mandate expanded from the fight against piracy into a broader maritime security operation and it is further strengthening links and synergies with the European Maritime Awareness Mission in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASOH)<sup>22</sup>. In the Mediterranean Sea, Operation Irini has as its primary task to enforce the UN arms embargo on Libya. This is a direct EU contribution to peace and stability in the Mediterranean, enhancing maritime security. In line with the Integrated Approach, the EU also contributes to enhancing maritime security by providing training and capacity building for partners through civilian CSDP missions, such as the European Union Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP) Somalia.

In 2021, the EU introduced the new concept of the **Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP)**. This flexible new tool aims to boost the EU's collective engagement on maritime security by making best use of Member States' naval assets in areas that are of strategic interest for the EU. In the context of CMP, the EU should step up the fight against illegal and illicit activities at sea, including drug trafficking. Based on the experience gained through CMP implementation in the Gulf of Guinea and in the North-Western Indian Ocean (including in the Red Sea), the EU will consider new maritime areas of interest where to implement this concept. The establishment of new maritime areas of interest would increase the EU's situational awareness, partnerships, and strategic culture as a maritime security actor.

The **EU Strategic Compass** also underlines the importance of ensuring readiness and interoperability among EU Member States' naval forces, and calls for the EU to conduct live

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<sup>20</sup> The 'integrated approach to external conflicts and crises' draws from the 2016 EU Global Strategy (Council Conclusions: EUCO 26/16 and 13202/16) and was endorsed by the 2018 Council Conclusions (5413/18). It identifies a framework for a more coherent and holistic engagement by the EU to external conflicts and crises and promotes human security and thereby also increases the security of the EU and its citizens.

<sup>21</sup> Such as the Comprehensive Strategy with Africa (JOIN(2020) 4 final), the EU Strategy on the Gulf of Guinea (7671/14), the EU Strategy for the Indo-Pacific (JOIN(2021) 24 final), the EU policy on the Arctic (JOIN(2021) 27 final), the Strategy on the Outermost regions COM(2022).

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/europe/news/article/european-maritime-awareness-in-the-soh-emasoh-political-statement-by-the>



exercises in all domains. The EU will therefore launch an annual naval exercise to boost readiness, foster interoperability and tackle the evolving threats to maritime security.

The Commission, assisted by EMSA, carries out maritime security inspections in ports, port facilities and ships in the EU, and is exploring ways to enhance maritime security in domains like passenger ships or cyber-security. In line with the strategic guidelines on the European **Integrated Border Management (EIBM)**<sup>23</sup>, the sea border surveillance system must be able to detect, identify and, if necessary, trace and intercept all vessels coming into territorial waters and contribute to ensuring the protection and saving of lives at sea in all weather conditions. Member States should make best use of surveillance capabilities offered by Frontex to upgrade national capabilities and overall situational awareness.

**Frontex** conducts operations such as Indalo, Themis and Poseidon to control the EU borders and to fight crime in the Mediterranean Sea, in particular the illegal smuggling of migrants. Frontex, the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) and EMSA conduct multipurpose maritime operations to fight cross-border crime, including the smuggling of migrants and the trafficking of human beings, to detect marine pollution and illegal fishing, and carry out other surveillance tasks in multiple sea basins around the EU, including the Black Sea. The EU should further develop these important multipurpose operations.

The key EU actions<sup>24</sup> to enhance maritime security will be:

- organising an annual EU naval exercise;
- reinforcing existing EU naval operations (Atalanta and Irini) with naval and air assets;
- considering new maritime areas of interest in which to implement the CMP concept, based on lessons learnt and on proposals from the European External Action Service;
- stepping up the fight against illegal and illicit activities at sea, including drug trafficking, in the context of CMP;
- maintaining and reinforcing maritime security inspections in the EU and addressing cyber-security and passenger ship security;
- stepping up EU-level cooperation on coast guard functions by promoting the development of multipurpose maritime operations in multiple sea basins around the EU.

## 2. Cooperate with partners

The EU has already forged relations and synergies on maritime security with multilateral and regional organisations both at global and at regional level (e.g. with the UN, IMO<sup>25</sup>, NATO, AU<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> COM(2022) 303

<sup>24</sup> The key EU actions listed under each of the six specific objectives summarize prominent elements of actions presented in detail in the action plan.

<sup>25</sup> International Maritime Organization of the United Nations

<sup>26</sup> African Union



and ASEAN<sup>27</sup>) and with several non-EU countries in particular in the Gulf of Guinea and the Indo-Pacific.

The EU and its Member States have also developed international cooperation through bilateral dialogues, port calls and live exercises, notably in the **Indo-Pacific region**, e.g. with Australia, Japan, India, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Oman and Singapore. Operations Atalanta and Irini participate in mechanisms for sharing awareness and for multilateral engagement, including Shared Awareness and Deconfliction (SHADE) Conferences. The European Union also provides significant support for maritime security under its development cooperation, humanitarian aid, and foreign policy support measures.

In the **Western Indian Ocean**, the EU supports a regional maritime architecture based on information fusion and operation centres in Madagascar and Seychelles, as well as on the Djibouti Code of Conduct concerning the Repression of Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in the Western Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, in the **Gulf of Guinea**, the EU supports regional organisations and coastal states implementing their own maritime security strategies, strengthening maritime law enforcement and justice, enhancing port security and safety, increasing maritime domain awareness and information sharing under the Yaoundé Architecture<sup>29</sup>. In the broader **Atlantic Ocean**, the EU supports the fight against illicit activities in cooperation with partners, in particular the fight against drug trafficking.

In a challenging geopolitical context, the EU should step up cooperation with partners in its neighbourhood and in **other strategically important maritime areas**. This is particularly important in light of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. The EU will intensify its cooperation with NATO on maritime security, building on the results achieved and in line with the third Joint Declaration on EU-NATO cooperation of January 2023. In the Indo-Pacific, the EU should increase the exchange of experience with partners on maritime security through the project "Enhancing Security Cooperation in and with Asia" (ESIWA) and bilateral dialogues and by seeking to be granted observer status ('Dialogue partner') in the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). The EU should also deepen its cooperation with like-minded countries and organisations including international and regional fora on maritime affairs.

The key EU actions on international cooperation will be:

- encouraging the signature and ratification of international instruments related to maritime security, notably UNCLOS, and promoting compliance, and sharing of best practices with partners, in implementing international law relevant for maritime security, in relevant fora;
- intensifying EU-NATO staff-to-staff cooperation on maritime security to cover all issues of mutual interest in this domain, including unexploded ordnance at sea, building on the three Joint Declarations of 2016, 2018 and 2023;

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<sup>27</sup> Maritime security has long been a shared priority for both the EU and ASEAN. Cooperation between the two regions has focused on responding to transnational maritime threats such as piracy, smuggling, illegal immigration, disaster risks and the impacts of pollution and climate change. The European Union supports the ASEAN-led process towards a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea; <https://euinasean.eu/maritime-cooperation/>

<sup>28</sup> Maritime Security in Eastern and Southern Africa and Indian Ocean (MASE), Port Security and Safety of Navigation Programme, Regional Programme for Maritime Security in the Red Sea Area, and CRIMARIO.

<sup>29</sup> SWAIMS, PASSMAR and GOGIN actions.

- conducting joint naval exercises with partners to boost interoperability, in addition to carrying out more frequent EU port calls and patrols, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, in line with the Strategic Compass;
- deploying EU liaison officers to maritime information fusion centres<sup>30</sup> in maritime areas of interest to promote information exchange and cooperation, including on law enforcement, justice and home affairs, between the EU and its partners and, where appropriate, evaluating the feasibility of directly connecting these fusion centres with relevant EU maritime surveillance systems;
- seeking Dialogue Partner status for the EU in the Indian Ocean Rim Association to enhance the EU's role as a partner in maritime security in the region;
- promoting international cooperation on information exchange and the surveillance of critical maritime infrastructure, including undersea cables<sup>31</sup>, as well as on ship and port security<sup>32</sup>.

### 3. Lead in maritime domain awareness

Sound maritime domain awareness is vital to ensuring that competent authorities can swiftly detect the growing and evolving threats affecting the EU and respond to them effectively. The EU will lead in maritime domain awareness by enhancing information collection and exchange among different maritime sectors<sup>33</sup>, and facilitating information sharing between Member States. At the international level, the EU will continue its work of enhancing Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) capacities of partner countries through information sharing and capacity building, especially in the Gulf of Guinea and in the Indo-Pacific.

Since 2014, the EU and its Member States have made significant progress in acquiring and exchanging information in the maritime domain by developing and connecting the sector-specific systems used by different authorities involved in maritime surveillance<sup>34</sup>. In particular, the EU has developed the Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE)<sup>35</sup>. Based on voluntary participation, the CISE will facilitate real-time information sharing between different authorities responsible for coast guard functions, including the military, connecting concerned authorities within and across Member States. On the basis of the EU CISE2020 research project, in April 2019 the Commission launched the transitional phase of CISE, entrusting its coordination to EMSA, in close cooperation with the Member States<sup>36</sup>. Building on the transitional phase, the Commission intends to launch the operational phase in 2024 with the support of EMSA, subject to the agreement of its Administrative Board.

<sup>30</sup> Maritime information fusion centres are national or regional entities that collect information to enhance maritime situational awareness in a given geographical area. In 2022, the EU deployed its first liaison officer to the Information Fusion Centre in Singapore, which covers most of the Indo-Pacific region.

<sup>31</sup> In accordance with the Council Recommendation 2023/C 20/01 on a Union-wide coordinated approach to strengthen the resilience of critical infrastructure.

<sup>32</sup> in accordance with the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code;  
<https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/Security/Pages/SOLAS-XI-2%20ISPS%20Code.aspx>

<sup>33</sup> Maritime sectors include safety and security of maritime transport, fisheries control, marine pollution preparedness and response, protection of marine environment, customs, border control, general law enforcement and defence.

<sup>34</sup> E.g. Eurosur and SafeSeaNet (operational systems at EU level).

<sup>35</sup> Council Document 9946-2021

<sup>36</sup> SWD (2019) 322 final

On defence, the maritime surveillance project (MARSUR) supported by the European Defence Agency (EDA) was designed to enable the naval forces of contributing Member States to exchange operational maritime information and services. MARSUR provides operational added value, as attested by the fact that the EU Member States chose to use it to implement the CMP concept in the Gulf of Guinea and in the North-Western Indian Ocean. EDA and participating Member States are currently working on the strengthening of MARSUR through a dedicated programme. In line with the Strategic Compass, which calls on the EU to strengthen its intelligence-based situational awareness and capabilities, the EU should make full use of all maritime surveillance capabilities (e.g. drones, patrol aircraft and space-based technology). The EU Space programme, through its components like Copernicus, Galileo and IRIS<sup>37</sup>, can contribute directly to increasing MDA. The EU Satellite Centre (EU SatCen) is also involved in MDA through its work with the EU Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity, and with the Commission on Galileo/Copernicus. In that regard, the resilience and security of relevant space assets is key to ensure continuity of services.

The EU has set up inter-agency cooperation between EFCA, EMSA and Frontex to support national coast guard authorities, including in the field of maritime situational awareness. The European Coast Guard Functions Forum and the Mediterranean Coast Guard Functions Forum can contribute to heightening maritime domain awareness and operational cooperation by exchanging best practices.

In case of disasters or accidents and when national capacities are overwhelmed, EU Member States and third countries can activate the Union Civil Protection Mechanism<sup>38</sup>. Through the Emergency Response Coordination Centre<sup>39</sup>, they can seek assistance, expertise or analysis of the situation.

The EU also contributes to enhancing MDA at international level by running dedicated development cooperation capacity-building initiatives. The project ‘Critical Maritime Routes in the Indo-Pacific’ (CRIMARIO)<sup>40</sup> has developed specific tools<sup>41</sup> to enhance MDA and strengthen cooperation with and among regional partners. This is coherent with the EU’s broader security and defence engagement in the Indo-Pacific region. In the similar vein, the project ‘Gulf of Guinea Interregional Network’ (GoGIN)<sup>42</sup> developed the YARIS platform, an information-sharing tool in support of the ‘Yaoundé Architecture’.

The key EU actions on maritime domain awareness will be:

- ensuring that the Common Information Sharing Environment becomes operational by mid-2024, enabling secure and structured exchange of classified and unclassified information among authorities from different maritime surveillance sectors (civilian and military);
- strengthening the defence maritime surveillance information exchange network (MARSUR) by launching a dedicated programme through EDA, and enhancing links between MARSUR and CISE;

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<sup>37</sup> [https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/welcome-iris2-infrastructure-resilience-interconnectivity-and-security-satellite-2022-11-17\\_en](https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/welcome-iris2-infrastructure-resilience-interconnectivity-and-security-satellite-2022-11-17_en)

<sup>38</sup> [EU Civil Protection Mechanism \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/eu-portal/footer/using-eu_en)

<sup>39</sup> [Emergency Response Coordination Centre \(ERCC\) \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/eu-portal/footer/using-eu_en)

<sup>40</sup> The European Commission is funding CRIMARIO with EUR 23 million between 2015 and 2025.

<sup>41</sup> The IORIS and the SHARE.IT platforms.

<sup>42</sup> The European Commission is funding GOGIN with EUR 11.5 million (2016-2023), and GOGIN II with EUR 5 million (2023-2025).

- capitalising on the investment made through the EU Space Policy and further exploiting the capacities available through Copernicus on maritime surveillance, marine environment monitoring and climate change;
- integrating space-based technologies, remotely piloted aircraft systems and radar stations, maritime patrol aircraft, and manned and unmanned seaborne means through innovative, cyber-resilient tools to boost maritime situational awareness;
- stepping up coastal and offshore patrol vessel surveillance and complementing it with digitally networked high-end naval platforms, including naval unmanned platforms to enhance prevention and response capabilities;
- strengthening maritime domain awareness capabilities of partner countries through the GoGIN and CRIMARIO projects, including by further operationalising maritime situational awareness tools (YARIS, IORIS and SHARE.IT) in coordination with Copernicus satellite services.

#### 4. Manage risks and threats

In line with the Strategic Compass, the EU and its Member States will improve their collective ability to defend their security and increase their resilience and preparedness for maritime security challenges, including hybrid and cyber threats. The EU and its Member States should be able to react quickly, with coordinated civilian and military capabilities.

Fighting climate change and environmental degradation are among the EU's top political priorities that are reflected in its external action through many thematic or geographical strategies such as Global Gateway or the Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, as well as through EU diplomatic outreach and EU Climate Diplomacy.

The EU has already taken significant steps to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, and will take further action on problems interlinked with climate change, environmental degradation and security. The High Representative and the Commission will present a Joint Communication on the nexus between climate change, environmental degradation and security and defence in mid-2023. It will include, inter alia, proposals for tools assessing the causes and consequences of climate change and environmental degradation on the maritime sector, on maritime infrastructure, as well as on natural and man-made features of coastal areas, including as regards early warning, evidence-based research and satellite imagery (e.g. through Copernicus programme).

In the Arctic, the ice caps are melting, sea ice is receding, new shipping routes are gradually opening up, and the consequent increase in human activities is expected to generate or aggravate threats to the environment and to local communities. In this regard the Joint Communication on “A stronger EU engagement for a greener, peaceful and prosperous Arctic”<sup>43</sup> must be further operationalised as soon as possible in particular with regard to zero emission shipping in the Arctic Ocean, sustainable mining of critical raw materials, and sustainable development of the Arctic regions.

Protecting critical infrastructure in the maritime domain also remains a key priority. The EU should complement the role of Member States in building up the resilience of critical maritime

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<sup>43</sup> JOIN(2021) 27 final

infrastructure such as pipelines or undersea cables that run across national maritime borders. It should improve current risk assessments on undersea cables and complement them with response options and mitigating measures building on cross-sectoral expertise and capacities. It is imperative to provide continued support to Member States to develop underwater protective assets and counter-drone solutions. In addition, the EU should continue to facilitate the coexistence<sup>44</sup> of offshore renewable energy with defence activities<sup>45</sup>, as advocated in the offshore renewable strategy<sup>46</sup>.

With the Directive on the resilience of critical entities<sup>47</sup> and the revised Directive on the security of network and information systems (NIS 2 Directive)<sup>48</sup>, the EU is at the forefront of relevant developments, with a comprehensive legal framework allowing it to upgrade both the physical and the cyber resilience of critical entities and infrastructure. The EU should step up cooperation with key partners and relevant non-EU countries in this area, in particular through the EU-NATO structured dialogue on resilience and the task force on resilience of critical infrastructure.

The EU faces the additional challenge posed by large quantities of unexploded ordnance (UXO) and chemical weapons originating from the First and Second World Wars lying in sea basins around the EU. This challenge is further exacerbated by Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, resulting in a large number of mines present in the Black Sea. The type, location and quantity of this ordnance are poorly documented, which poses risks to maritime safety and security, to the environment (due to possible release of chemicals) and to blue economy activities (e.g. the construction of offshore renewable energy sites). Building on existing successful projects<sup>49</sup>, the EU should address this issue urgently and comprehensively, mitigating the environmental risks associated with UXO and their disposal. It will also be very important to dispose safely of UXO and mines left in the Black Sea, as soon as security and political conditions allow.

Maritime security is also undermined by foreign actors, both due to risks related to foreign direct investment in critical infrastructure, and to information manipulation and interference by such actors. These issues will be addressed through relevant instruments and frameworks; e.g. foreign direct investment will be screened in line with the relevant Regulation<sup>50</sup>.

The Commission and Member States are carrying out a risk assessment in view of producing guidance to enhance passenger ship security in the EU.

The key EU actions on risk and threat management will be:

- conducting regular, full-scale, live exercises at EU level, focused on harbour protection and on countering threats such as cyber and hybrid ones, in addition to the annual naval exercise mentioned above;
- deploying assets and surveillance tools (e.g. RPAS) and ensure the optimal use of current

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<sup>44</sup> In line with the MSP Directive, 2014/89/EU

<sup>45</sup> The 'Symbiosis' project ongoing under the co-ordination of the European Defence Agency, with Horizon 2020 funds; <https://eda.europa.eu/symbiosis>

<sup>46</sup> COM(2020) 741 final

<sup>47</sup> Directive (EU) 2022/2557

<sup>48</sup> Directive (EU) 2022/2555

<sup>49</sup> Projects to clean the Baltic Sea from chemical warfare and conventional munitions supported by the Interreg programme financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) - [10 years of Interreg cooperation to free the Baltic Sea from dumped munitions - Interreg Baltic Sea Region \(interreg-baltic.eu\)](#)

<sup>50</sup> Regulation (EU) 2019/452



and future space services (such as earth observation) to patrol and protect critical maritime infrastructure;

- developing EU regional cooperation plans to ensure the surveillance of underwater and offshore infrastructure;
- developing a coherent framework to address the threats posed by UXO, active weapons and chemical weapons at sea, monitoring and removing them with innovative technologies and at a minimal environmental impact;
- improving early warning and strategic foresight, inter alia through the use of space services, on the effects of climate change, particularly sea-level rise, storm surges, and environmental degradation;
- drawing up new and reinforcing existing risk assessments, contingency plans and disaster recovery plans (EU level and national level) for ports, coastal infrastructure, as well as passenger ship security and transport / supply chains;
- encouraging the exchange of best practices between maritime actors on cyber threats, and further addressing cybersecurity at the level of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO);
- enhancing maritime domain awareness in the Arctic, including space observation; continued engagement with Arctic coastal States bilaterally and in relevant multilateral fora, as appropriate, to support the implementation of the Arctic Policy<sup>51</sup>;
- assessing the possibility of deploying offshore renewable projects and other sustainable uses in maritime areas reserved or used for military activities;
- assessing investment into maritime infrastructure by non-EU countries and entities in the context of the cooperation mechanism set up by the Regulation on the screening of foreign direct investments.

## 5. Enhance capabilities

To promote its maritime security interests, the EU should accelerate the development of both civilian and military capabilities, involving industry as appropriate. Research & Development (R&D) on civilian aspects of European maritime security is included in the Civil Security for Society cluster of the EU Horizon Europe programme. Current and upcoming R&D will support capability development at the EU level, including protection of critical maritime infrastructure, management of underwater threats, preparedness and response to anthropogenic and natural disasters, security of maritime passenger transport, and management of UXO, involving industry where appropriate.

In the area of defence, Member States should develop a full spectrum of maritime capabilities, making full use of the scope for cooperation under related EU initiatives<sup>52</sup>. In particular, they should focus on boosting capabilities to ensure EU surface superiority, to project power at sea, to enable underwater control and to contribute to air defence.

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<sup>51</sup> Join(2021)27 final

<sup>52</sup> The Capability Development Plan, the collaborative opportunities identified under the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence, the Permanent Structured Cooperation, the European Defence Fund.

The upcoming revision of the Capability Development Plan<sup>53</sup> will also draw on the lessons learnt from Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. For instance, EDA will explore the key technologies required to manage maritime unmanned drone swarms and to protect critical seabed infrastructure.

As called for by the Strategic Compass and in line with the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD)<sup>54</sup>, national and multinational projects should aim to both overcome fragmentation in critical assets such as corvette-size vessels and on-board systems and improve the operational effectiveness of individual platforms. Several opportunities for cooperation identified in the 2020 CARD cycle have led to Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) projects in unmanned maritime systems, e.g. the Medium-Size Semi-Autonomous Surface Vehicle. The European Defence Fund<sup>55</sup> will assess research and development projects, for example on maritime situational awareness, maritime surveillance capabilities, critical maritime infrastructure protection and underwater capabilities.

The key EU actions to enhance capabilities will be:

- developing common requirements and concepts for technology in defence, including for maritime domain awareness, both at the surface and underwater;
- building interoperable unmanned systems to monitor critical maritime infrastructure, to counter hostile drone swarms etc.;
- increasing modern mine countermeasures capabilities, e.g. by developing an EU concept of operations;
- supporting the development of joint enhanced maritime patrol aircraft capabilities;
- building up joint testing and experimentation exercises to develop future, state-of-the-art maritime capabilities.

## 6. Educate and train

A high level of specialised education, skills and training is indispensable for the EU to be equipped to tackle present and future maritime security challenges. Tackling new hybrid and cyber threats requires operators with strong digital skillsets and specific re-skilling and up-skilling programmes. Solutions in the form of exchanges between military training programmes, joint training programmes between the navies of EU Member States and between different institutions will boost interoperability and help the EU respond to new threats in a more effective, coordinated and inclusive way.

As part of the *Practical handbook on European cooperation on coast guard functions*, a training catalogue has been created, covering all courses run by EU Agencies across all maritime domains. The handbook will be updated on a rolling basis in line with needs and developments. The successful European Coast Guard Functions Training Academy Network project (ECGFA NET) and the harmonised training course on the coast guard function should continue, especially the exchange programme, which involves neighbouring countries and regional cooperation through a

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<sup>53</sup> EDA's Steering Board of June 2022 formally launched the revision of the Capability Development Plan.

<sup>54</sup> Focus area 'European Patrol Class Surface Ships'.

<sup>55</sup> The aim of the EDF is to strengthen the competitiveness and innovation capacity of the defence industry in the EU. It therefore contributes to developing the military capabilities of the Member States.



dedicated project implemented by EFCA in close cooperation with EMSA and Frontex. EMSA is also developing a course on maritime cybersecurity. The Hybrid Centre of Excellence in Helsinki (Hybrid CoE) organises courses and conferences on hybrid threats affecting the maritime domain. Gender equality and the empowerment of women in the EU maritime security sector should be supported, promoting access to high level technical education and training for women.

The European Security and Defence College (ESDC)<sup>56</sup> provides EU-level training and education for both civilian and military personnel to promote a common understanding of maritime security challenges and raise awareness about the increasing role of EU in this field. With support from the ESDC, six European naval academies are currently working on the content of a common, international naval semester.

The key EU actions on education and training<sup>57</sup> will be:

- boosting cyber-, hybrid- and space-related security skills by supporting new and existing training courses offered by various academic institutions and competent national or EU bodies, both in the civilian and military areas;
- conducting dedicated training programmes open to non-EU partners to tackle existing and emerging threats to maritime security;
- developing an ‘international naval semester’ under the European Initiative for the Exchange of Military Young Officers (EMILYO)<sup>58</sup>;
- conducting civil-military exercises based on scenarios involving shared jurisdiction or shared use of capabilities.

## **V. TOOLS AND INSTRUMENTS TO SUPPORT EU ACTION ON MARITIME SECURITY**

The updated strategy should be implemented in the spirit of the integrated approach to maximise synergies and bring in complementary EU tools and instruments. This should include:

- the European Defence Fund R&D defence projects to boost the capabilities of the armed forces of EU Member States;
- the European Peace Facility as an off-budget funding mechanism for EU action under the Common Foreign and Security Policy with military and defence implications;
- EU research and innovation on civilian maritime security capabilities particularly under Cluster 3 ‘Civil Security for Society’ of the EU’s Horizon Europe programme.

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<sup>56</sup> The ESDC, in the context of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), provides EU-level training and education, in the field of the Union’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). It aims to develop and promote a common understanding of CSDP among civilian and military personnel, and to identify and disseminate, through its training activities, good practices in relation to various CSDP issues. By doing so, the ESDC complements the national efforts in the field of training and education.

<sup>57</sup> Including as part of the Year of Skills.

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.emilyo.eu/>; EMILYO is not linked to the Erasmus+ Programme.

- the opportunities offered by the Internal Security Fund and Border Management and Visa Instrument to boost the capabilities of Member State coast guard authorities carrying out law enforcement and border control tasks at sea;
- the Union Civil Protection Mechanism in particular through benefiting from analytical and response capacities as well as implementing the Commission recommendation on disaster resilience goals;
- the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument programme supporting international partnerships to enhance maritime security, in particular maritime situational awareness;
- the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (2021-2017), IPA III, given its scope and focus on candidate countries;
- the Common Foreign and Security Policy budget to fund civilian CSDP missions;
- the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) to fund maritime surveillance and cooperation on coast guard function;
- the European Regional Development and Fund (ERDF) and Interreg programmes supporting investments in coastal and outermost regions and territories and in countries sharing maritime borders with the EU;
- the Internal Security Funds that fund the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre – Narcotics (MAOC-N) and its specific capabilities to exchange information to tackle drug trafficking at sea.

## **VI. WAY FORWARD**

The Commission and the High Representative will work together with the Council to implement this updated strategy in the areas of action identified above and detailed in the action plan, building on achievements of the EUMSS since 2014, using existing instruments and policies, and following the overall guidance of the Strategic Compass.

The Commission and the High Representative invite the Member States to endorse the strategy and action plan. Three years after the strategy is endorsed by the Council, the Commission and the High Representative will submit to the Council a joint progress report with contributions from the Member States.