

UNODC inputs to the SG report on oceans and the law of the sea

The present contribution showcases the work carried out by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) between September 2023 and May 2024 to support Member States in the implementation of the General Assembly resolution 78/69, on Oceans and the law of the sea.

II. Capacity-building

Pursuant to OP 33, which “[..] welcomes ongoing activities for capacity-building so as to address maritime security and protection of the marine environment of developing States, and encourages States and international financial institutions to provide additional funding for capacity-building programmes, including for transfer of technology, including through the International Maritime Organization and other competent international organizations”

- In South Asia, UNODC conducted an assessment on information sharing mechanisms in the Indian Ocean region specifically between maritime operations centers in **Bangladesh, Maldives, and Sri Lanka**, and regional information fusion centers located **in the Indian Ocean**, including the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC) in Madagascar and the Regional Coordination Operations Centre (RCOC) in Seychelles. Based on this assessment, UNODC developed a comprehensive training matrix with proposed multilevel capacity building programs aimed at enhancing the capacity of maritime operations centers in exchanging and sharing information with regional information fusion centers, and vice versa. In line with the document, regular training is being delivered in South Asian coastal states.
- A four-day Expert Group Meeting was held in Vienna in November 2023 to emphasize the critical issue of pollution crimes that affect the marine environment. The discussions

as well as the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre and the Regional Coordination Operations Centre to enhance the ability to detect illicit activity at sea. In support of the regional MLE Exercise Cutlass Express 2024, UNODC provided training on UNCLOS to MLE and MDA personnel from around the Indian Ocean region prior to their participation in the exercise's VBSS and Maritime Operations Centre events. In November 2023, UNODC, with the support of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, officially presented a "ship box" simulator to **Mauritius** to support training and provide a facility for local personnel to practice maritime tactics and visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS) interdictions in a safe and controlled manner, better preparing them for ~~real~~ world scenarios.

- UNODC has also delivered training (Tabletop Exercises, country workshops, and simulated trials) to actors across the entire criminal justice chain, including prosecutors, judges, and magistrates in the **Western Indian Ocean Region** to achieve legal finish of maritime crimes. In light of the broadened mandate of the European Union Naval Force Operation (EUNAVFOR) ATALANTA, the Government of Seychelles (GoS) and the European Union (EU) began negotiations in early 2021. The Exchange of Letters outlines modalities for GoS to authorize EUNAVFOR to transfer suspects apprehended in Seychelles' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and Territorial Waters (TW), as well as Seychellois suspects and Seychellois vessels on the high seas. The EU proposes to provide "financial, human resources, material, logistical and infrastructural assistance for the detention, incarceration, maintenance, investigation, prosecution, trial, and repatriation of the suspected or convicted arms traffickers and narcotics traffickers." In close collaboration with the European Union, UNODC will focus on improving the existing infrastructure on Marie Louis Island and enhancing capacity building efforts to achieve the legal finish.
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cooperation, and better tackle maritime safety and security issues. It also included tabletop exercises focusing on hypothetical scenarios, particularly drug trafficking at sea, and fostering a shared understanding of challenges and solutions. The ~~discussions~~ highlighted the necessity of adopting a unified approach to UNCLOS implementation across IORA member states to promote cooperation and coordinated action.

- In March 2024, UNODC, in partnership with the Sri Lanka Navy, organized a conference on Maritime Domain Awareness titled "Charting Unruly Waters: Enhancing Maritime Domain Awareness in the Indian Ocean Region". This initiative convened a diverse array of participants, including international experts, policymakers, security agencies, information fusion centers, think tanks, and other maritime stakeholders from the Indian Ocean to explore challenges and opportunities related to the concept of Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) in **the Indian Ocean region**
- UNODC is heavily invested in the development of initiatives and the design of strategic institutional frameworks to support sustainable information sharing. In this regard, in **the Caribbean**, UNODC has supported **the Dominican Republic and Jamaica** in entering into Memoranda of Understanding on Law Enforcement Cooperation and Search and Rescue at Sea. UNODC is providing further assistance to The Bahamas and the Dominican Republic, as well as the Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago, and the Dominican Republic and Panama, to enter into similar agreements to institutionalize cooperation and provide solid legal frameworks upon which this cooperation can be fostered.
- UNODC has also supported the establishment of a coastal investigators and prosecutors' network across **Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Panama** to exchange operational information and develop strategic investigations. As part of this effort, in 2023, 20 formal investigations into groups that operate at sea have been launched across the participating countries, including two requests for mutual assistance.
- UNODC has also developed strategic and operational initiatives to **assist Brazil, Colombia, Peru, and Paraguay** in tackling transnational organized crime along shared riverways, such as the Amazon River and the Paraná River.
- UNODC facilitated the organization and substantive discussions at the 2023 plenary session of the G7++ Friends of the Gulf of Guinea Group (G7++ FoGG), held in **Dakar, Senegal**, from December 5 to 7, 2023. The session, which marked the 10th anniversary of the Yaoundé architecture, was the focus of the meeting and attracted over 200 participants both in person and virtually. The plenary provided an opportunity for attendees ~~as~~ as the current maritime security landscape and review ongoing efforts to address various illegal maritime activities ongoing ef-6h(t)-poeni-7([goi)ct ope e t13 5 t s12(a)oG,da2023-

efforts to counter transnational organized crime at sea, focusing on emerging threats, new technology, and best practices. Additionally, to promote interoperability, UNODC has assisted **Jamaica** and its Defence Forces with the planning and execution of a **country** and multidomain exercise across the Caribbean Basin. Over ten days, this exercise involved assets and maritime law enforcement officers from over nine countries coordinating efforts to tackle simulated scenarios related to drug trafficking, **sea** and rescue, humanitarian assistance, and disaster response.

- In September 2023, UNODC held the regional biannual Prosecutors' Network Forum (PNF) under the aegis of the Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crimes (IOFMC) in **Madagascar** for prosecutors from the **Indian Ocean West and Indian Ocean East regions**. The aim of the forum was to enhance the skills of prosecutors, thereby reinforcing the criminal justice chain in the fight against transnational organized crimes at sea. During the five-day forum, the prosecutors discussed legal hindrances they **must** overcome both at the national and regional ssos(a)4(n2(c),(o)-14c 0 Tw Tw 21.8 29.P)Tj EMC 9T /LBody0-2(n f B

provides Coast Guard vessels with [pre-recorded voice instructions](#) in eight different languages on MP3 players to avoid misunderstanding or miscommunication at sea.

- After a series of successful Inter-Ministerial Committee meetings held in 2023 and coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Maritime Affairs Unit, and facilitated by UNODC's Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP) in Bangladesh, the Inter Ministerial Committee has completed the drafting process of the National Submarine Cable Protection and Resilience Framework. The completed draft was handed over for further

criminal infiltration, and poor socioeconomic development in the coastal areas of Barahona, Pedernales, and Palmar de Ocoa.