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Maritime Security and COVID-19: RMIFC and RCOC continue their activities

In response to the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic caused by a new Coronavirus, the Regional Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC) and the Regional Coordination Operations Centre (RCOC) in collaboration with the national centres of the 7 signatory countries of the MASE agreements (Comoros, Djibouti, France/Reunion, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles) continue to ensure the surveillance and control of the Western Indian Ocean maritime zone. Supported by the Indian Ocean Commission through the EU-funded MASE programme, the two regional centres have applied new working procedures to better adapt to local regulations in force.

For several weeks now, the COVID-19 pandemic led several countries into unprecedented sanitary crisis followed by a significant economic slowdown. The Indian Ocean region has not been spared and several riparian countries have declared a state of sanitary emergency with national lockdown to flatten the curve of coronavirus.

The Republic of Madagascar and the Seychelles, which host respectively the RMIFC and RCOC centres, also applied some emergency measures to deal with the pandemic. The management of the two Regional centres have implemented mechanisms to apply a continuity plan for their activities in accordance with local authorities' decisions.

Indeed, the Malagasy government declared a health emergency in 3 cities (Analamanga, Antananarivo and Toamasina) for an initial period of 15 days. This confinement period has been extended for further 15 days and will end on 20th April. This decision imposed a partial restriction on people's movement in these localities, border shutdown (closing of the airport) and a ban of ships (cruises) docking the various ports of the country.

RMIFC and RCOC adapt their daily operations to new situation

The 5 International Liaison officers (representing the signatory countries) currently posted at RMIFC have meanwhile switched to teleworking. A minimal service is assured by a small support team of staff members at the centre.

The RCOC has also been subjected to COVID-19 national restrictions of the host country. The centre has opted for teleworking as much as possible as recommended by the Seychelles Government. The six International Liaison officers (ILO) have been working from home for the past two weeks until further notice.

However, considered as an essential service for the Seychelles authorities among others, the RCOC continues to provide a nonstop service (24/7). A team of watchstanders, operating on shift, ensures a continuing presence at the Centre. The duty service for the ILOs is also maintained. The on-call ILO has the responsibility to coordinate with the team on duty to prepare daily briefings as well as watchfloor activities.



The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted several organisations to rethink their daily way of working. This unprecedented sanitary crisis challenges not only a structure's day to day organization but also its capacity to adapt quickly. The centres which brought together maritime security experts from different countries in the region, are now equipped with advanced technology materials that allow them not only to telework while keeping in touch with colleagues and partners, but also to continue carrying out their maritime surveillance and control missions despite the complex situation.

For more information, please click on the following links:

[The regional mechanism on Maritime Security in Western Indian Ocean](#)

[The RMIFC](#)

[The RCOC](#)

[The MASE programme](#)