



Regional Exercise on combatting drug trafficking

On 29 July 2020, the RCOC coordinated a TTX (tabletop exercise) for the fight against narcotics trafficking in the Western Indian Ocean region.

Objective: To test and improve operational coordination between Regional and National Centres.

An exercise focused on drug trafficking

Three National Centres of the signatory States of the two MASE agreements participated in this regional exercise:

- The Comoros Maritime Operations Centre (CMOC);
- the Joint Operations Centre of Kenya (JOCK); and
- the National Information Sharing Coordination Centre of Seychelles (NISCC).

The RMIFC, complementary to the RCOC, was also involved in this vital training. It contributes mainly to strengthen the **maritime surveillance and control mechanism**. It was set up by the IOC through the MASE programme funded by the European Union.

In other words?

Effective coordination of regional actions requires regular training session with the whole team. Indeed, they must be fully operational on the day a critical event occurs. The exercise on drug trafficking thus is an opportunity to test:

- Interoperability between key stakeholders withing the region
- The operational planning of available assets (e.g. Seychelles aircraft, Comorian patrol boat) and their deployment
- The application of standard operating procedures (SOPs)

This was made possible thanks to available digital communication platforms including the Maritime Platform Collaboration (MPC) and Maritime Awareness System (MAS) among others.



A Maritime Security mechanism for the Western Indian Ocean

As the cornerstone of the [Maritime Security Architecture](#) for the Western Indian Ocean, the RCOC (based in Seychelles) and RMIFC (based in Madagascar), as well as the national centres of the 7 signatory States, are now able to exchange and share maritime information and carry out missions of regional interest thanks to the MASE agreements.

Regional cooperation and coordination are ensured by the International Liaison Officers (ILOs), who are deployed by the signatory states and posted in the two regional centres. They are in permanent contact with their counterparts in the National Centres. The ILOs enable the countries to play a leading role in the fight against crimes and threats at sea in the region.

More TTXs in the future

Despite the significant impact of Covid-19 on activities, the Regional and National Centres remain mobilized. They are not only organising remote training sessions, but also multilateral working sessions to strengthen the mechanism for exchanging and sharing maritime information.

The TTX on drug trafficking is the second training organized by the two Regional Centres. The first was held on 3 July and the theme that tackled was Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing.

Far from operating in silos, the Regional centres also took part (from 27 to 31 July) in the CUTLASS Express 2021 Initial Planning Event. This exercise was organised by the US Naval Forces with a view to refining international cooperation in the field of maritime security.

In addition, several table-top exercises on other topics are planned until the end of the year. The aim is to continue working on the implementation of the maritime security architecture between national centres, regional centres and other regional partners. The idea is to improve the technical and operational capacity of officers to better prepare them for coordinated missions at sea.