

Press Release

CRIMARIO - MASE Regional Maritime Exercise (CRIMASREX 21/1) - 20 - 24 September 2021 – Lessons Learnt Conference

The CRIMARIO-MASE Regional Maritime Exercise 21/1 (CRIMASREX 21/1) debrief took place on Thursday 30 September 2021 with representatives from 17 participating agencies, belonging to 7 countries of the Western Indian Ocean. Participants reported on the positive outcome and lessons learnt, from the exercise, which was organised by the CRIMARIO project in collaboration with the MASE programme that is implemented by the Indian Ocean Commission and funded by the European Union. The tabletop exercise which simulated a health crisis at sea, witnessed an excellent mobilisation of all the maritime search and rescue (MRCC) organisations supported by the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC) and the Regional Coordination Operations Centre (RCOC). Of significant relevance, the exercise brought together, for the first time, several national and international entities on the thematic of sharing and exchange of information in the context of Search and Rescue at Sea.

The RETEX CRIMASREX 21/1 conference was conducted by Olivier Bézier, the Exercise Director from the CRIMARIO project with the support of MASE programme technical team. During the debrief, the IOC welcomed the positive outcome of CRIMASREX 21/1 and encouraged MASE agreements signatory States and neighbouring countries to make the most of this exercise. This included the examination of their preparedness and ability to share and exchange information, to be able to react in a timely manner, implementing initial responses and regional coordinated actions at sea.

This command post tabletop exercise focused on a crisis at sea triggering multiple health-related and Search and Rescue operations. During the first two days, 7 ships simulated a major food poisoning incident on board, and on the third day, two aircrafts simulated crashing in the area. The Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres (MRCC) were tasked to coordinate response actions at national level, while notifying to the IOC regional centres (RMIFC and RCOC) of the evolving situation, the latter assessing the origins of the threat to better appreciate potential consequences.

The intensive use of the IORIS communication and coordination platform, coupled with other monitoring systems, facilitated the simultaneous and rapid mobilisation of actors throughout the area covered by the crisis.

Following this first exhaustive search and rescue/health incident exercise, participating centres were able to assess their respective organisational procedures with a view to making recommendations to the competent authorities, notably the added value support from RMIFC and RCOC as complementary regional centres in major search and rescue operations. The participants also expressed their willingness to continue this type of table-top exercise through joint defined scenarios by the two regional centres and CRIMARIO.

The 7 participating countries, including Comoros, France/Reunion, Kenya, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles, mobilised the relevant search and rescue agencies, besides the two regional maritime centres (RMIFC and RCOC). Participants hailed from National Maritime Centres, Coast Guards, Navies, Maritime Affairs, Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres (MRCC), and Health Services.

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