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## Press Release

### Maritime security | The CRFIM and the CRCO carry out their first maritime surveillance operation with EUNAVFOR

The Regional Maritime Information Fusion Center (RMIFC) and the Regional Operations Coordination Center (RCOC) conducted their first joint operation with a unit from EUNAVFOR Atalanta from September 21 to 24. This first mission, named Operation MARLIN, aimed at strengthening maritime security in the Western Indian Ocean through sustainable collaboration between the states of the region and international partners. It contributed to the implementation of the cooperation agreement signed between the European mission EUNAVFOR and the two regional centers in December 2021, as part of the development of the Western Indian Ocean Maritime Security Architecture implemented by the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) through the EU-funded Regional Maritime Security Program (MASE).

Operation MARLIN focused on the fight against drug trafficking and illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing). It took place within the exclusive economic zone of the Seychelles. The operation saw the deployment of several naval air assets, namely the Spanish frigate ESPS NUMANCIA, equipped with a helicopter and a drone, the patrol boat PS ETOILE of the Seychelles Coast Guards and the maritime patrol aircraft DORNIER 228 of the Seychelles Air Forces.

The joint operation enabled the detection and surveillance of more than 20 vessels over an area of about 150,000 km<sup>2</sup> thanks to the information provided by the airborne means. It remains an important step in the structuring and strengthening of this technical and operational cooperation to achieve an optimal level of interoperability.

It also allowed the seven signatory states of the MASE agreements (Comoros, Djibouti, France (Reunion), Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, and Seychelles) to benefit from the professional experience of the European Naval Force and to share best practices through their liaison officers based in the two regional centers.

This new operation has demonstrated the new challenges inherent in maritime operations. In addition to the surveillance and control action, this type of operation is a way to test, improve and strengthen the technical and human capacities of the regional maritime security architecture to, in the long run, better respond to security challenges in the maritime spaces of the Western Indian Ocean region in collaboration with external partners.

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