



INDIAN OCEAN  
COMMISSION



Republic of Mauritius

## Ministerial Declaration

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Ministerial Conference on Maritime Security and Safety in the Western Indian Ocean

*Balaclava, Republic of Mauritius – 16 November 2023*

---

#### **Preamble**

**Recalling** the adopted Declarations of the 2018 and 2019 Ministerial Conference on Maritime Security in the Western Indian Ocean;

**Considering** the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2608 of 3 December 2021 on the continued efforts to combat piracy while addressing evolving challenges

**Recognizing** the need for the strengthening, the consolidation and expansion of the Western Indian Ocean Regional Maritime Security Architecture as a prerequisite and key mechanism for the development of the ocean/blue economy and the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area as well as for the prevention, reduction and coordinated response to risks, offences, and crimes at sea, particularly with regard to marine and coastal ecosystems;

**Considering** the Moroni “Blue Future” Ministerial Declaration on Climate Action and Blue Economy in Africa of 14 June 2023.

\*\*\*\*\*

**We, the Ministers and Representatives of participating States and Organisations, at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ministerial Conference on Maritime Security and Safety in the Western Indian Ocean held on 16 November 2023, in Balaclava, Republic of Mauritius agree to the following :**

#### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **Status of implementation of the last two Ministerial conferences declarations and way forward**

1. The Conference recognises that the Ministerial Conferences’ outcomes require a regionally led, coordinated and complementary maritime security and safety mechanism as a deterrence against transboundary illicit and criminal activities at sea.
2. The Conference recognises maritime security and safety require collective efforts. It further recognises that national maritime capability is the bedrock of any regional mechanism which should be based on principles of national sovereignty and regional appropriation and ownership.



INDIAN OCEAN  
COMMISSION



*Republic of Mauritius*

3. The Conference takes note of the steps taken to implement the previous Conferences' outcomes towards a strong, modern and regionally owned maritime security and safety architecture (MSSA) with the support of the European Union.
4. The Conference commends the following:
  - a) The operationalization of the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC) towards a comprehensive maritime picture of the Western Indian Ocean, which eventually will enable each participating country to determine its area of interest and vessels of interest. The Conference calls upon key international actors in this area to provide sustained support in this regard.
  - b) The operationalization of the Regional Coordination of Operations Centre (RCOC) which significantly improves regional maritime capability and which has even led to legal finish.
  - c) The decision of the DCoC Information Sharing Network to work towards a cooperation agreement to collaborate with regional centres established under the MASE Framework and incorporate the two Centres i.e., the RMIFC in Madagascar and the RCOC in Seychelles, to optimise the use of resources.
  - d) The partnership established through the signature of cooperation agreements of the MSSA Centres (RMIFC-RCOC) with IFC-IOR, IMO, IOM, XXXXXX and the upcoming one with Information Fusion Centre Singapore in order to provide the region with a comprehensive maritime picture.
5. The Conference acknowledges the contribution of the EU through the MASE Programme and other EU-funded initiatives for the operationalisation of the RMIFC and RCOC and calls for the additional support of other partners.
6. The challenges in ensuring maritime security and safety are complex. There is a need to improve multi-agency coordination approach. The Conference commends that most of the countries in the region have already established and operationalised their National Information Sharing mechanism. The Conference further commends the decision of the IOC, the MSSA and Djibouti Code of Conduct – Jeddah Amendment (DCoC/JA) to work together on information exchange and coordinated actions at sea. The Conference recognises the need for promoting the transfer of technology and know-how and adequate human resources development. The Conference recommends the regional States to establish national Maritime Security and Safety Strategies (MSSS) and commit to their full operationalisation.
7. Given that maritime security and safety in the Western Indian Ocean is impacted by events and activities in the wider region, the Conference recommends a more coordinated and coherent approach to ensure maritime security and safety in the Indian Ocean.



INDIAN OCEAN  
COMMISSION



*Republic of Mauritius*

### **Combat against drugs and other illicit trafficking**

8. Recognising that Drugs Trafficking and Substance Abuse is a global challenge and has serious health, social and economic consequences, the Conference reaffirms the need for cooperation at the national, regional and international levels.
9. The Conference supports strongly the work of the Regional Architecture for Maritime Security for the fight against drug trafficking and calls for strengthened and effective collaboration with the RMIFC for identification of vessels of interests and RCOG for coordination of intervention at sea, followed by inspection.
10. The Conference calls for elaboration of regional and international frameworks to enable legal finish for drugs and other illicit trafficking and imprisonment for the culprits.
11. The Conference commends the organization of the first Regional Conference on Drugs and Substance Abuse in Mauritius in April 2023. The conference recommends the implementation of the agreed outcomes aimed at addressing illicit drugs and substance abuse, notably the establishment of a Regional as well as an international Cooperation Frameworks, network of National Structures in charge for Drugs Traffic and Substance Abuse and regional drug Observatory, at the earliest. To ensure effective implementation and attainment of results, the Conference commends Mauritius for hosting a Ministerial Conference against Drugs Trafficking and Substance Abuse in 2024.

### **Contact Group on Illicit Maritime Activities**

12. The Conference takes good note of the provisions of Resolution 2608 and the change of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) to addressing other maritime security and safety threats by the Contact Group on Illicit Maritime Activities (CGIMA).
13. The Conference acknowledges that CGIMA:
  - a) takes a strategic overview together with support amongst regional and international members on some of the key maritime safety and security key issues with a focus on legal finish or the cooperation aspects to achieve a legal finish in some key areas.
  - b) will require significant diplomacy in a complex legal area as well as support from the region and the international Community.
14. The Conference commends the current CGIMA Chair, Kenya, on the gearing of the Contact Group towards actions beyond piracy and calls for support to the new process.

## **Prevention and preparedness against marine pollution**

15. Recent events have demonstrated the need for enhanced coordination actions to address marine pollution given limited technical, human and financial resources at the national level.
16. The Conference commends the collective work undertaken by the IOC for enhancing preparedness at the regional level to respond effectively to marine pollution through the organization of a Table Top Exercise and Field Training Exercises in July and September 2023 respectively. A regional oil spill contingency plan is being elaborated which aims to pool the limited resources available in the region and access international support to effectively act on a pollution event as fast as possible.
17. The Conference supports the avoidance of a multiplicity of actions and supports a coordinated and coherent approach to the effective establishment of a practical and sustainable regional/international cooperation mechanism for the prevention and preparedness against marine pollution for the WIO. This may include:
  - a) Financial support to a dedicated Programme towards the achievement of the above. This Programme should include work towards the establishing of a regional/international technical and human resource capability for escalating response to significant pollution incidents on the basis of an agreed mechanism. This includes availability and willingness for provision of equipment and manpower suitable for the requirements to deal with a pollution incident in the region as per a request from an affected country.
  - b) Providing key information that can be utilized during incidents or exercises for prevention, risk mitigation and salvage capabilities in the region (such as response personnel and inventory of response equipment, products and other means) to be included in informational Annexes of the Regional Contingency Plan. In this regard, the Conference notes that the IOC has initiated a study and the RCOC work towards the establishment of a directory on a voluntary basis of regional and international partners which will be an online platform to be updated regularly.
  - c) Support for capacity building for auditing equipment, logistical, personnel and technical resources available within countries to respond pollution incidents, identifying and accessing the 'tools' (satellite imagery, oil spill modelling, met-ocean data etc...) that are needed during a response, financial procedures for requesting and offering assistance, the verification of the condition of equipment and maintenance as well as organisation of national and regional exercises, developing and maintaining working relations with potential 'incident stakeholders' (shipowners, vessel insurers, their technical advisors, IOPC Fund,



INDIAN OCEAN  
COMMISSION



*Republic of Mauritius*

IMO, EU, salvors, offshore installation operators and spill response organizations) that can be established to ensure a coordinated response.

- d) Implementation of annual Field Training Exercise and commends the decision for the next one to be held in Mombasa, Kenya, in 2024.

### **Improving Ports Security and Safety of Navigation**

- 18. The Conference recognises the WIO as one of the busiest maritime routes and its importance for global trade and economy in terms of cargo traffic and oil shipment.
- 19. The Conference views with great interest and encourages the collective work of the IMO, Interpol and UNODC and the IOC to improve ports security and safety of navigation towards the formulation and adoption of a Regional Policy on Ports Security and Safety of Navigation, under the EU-funded Port Security and Safety of Navigation Programme.
- 20. The Conference commends the organization by the IOC of a Ministerial conference on Port Safety and Security of Navigation in 2024.

### **Initiating a Western Indian Ocean Coast Guards Forum**

- 21. The Conference takes good note of the outcome of the June 2023 Moroni "Blue Future" Declaration and the initiative to establish a regional coast guard forum.
- 22. The Conference supports the sharing of experience and developing cooperation among neighbouring institutions in charge for surveillance at sea.
- 23. The Coast Guard Global Summit hosted by Japan acts as a global platform for dialogue and cooperation of the world's Coast Guards. The proposed Western Indian Ocean Coast Guards Forum will contribute to the efforts of the Coast Guard Global Summit.
- 24. The Conference invites all concerned stakeholders to work towards the establishment of the Western Indian Ocean Coast Guards Forum.

### **Wildlife traffic**

- 25. The Conference commends the collaboration amongst TRAFFIC, Trade in Wildlife Information eXchange platforms (TWIX), SADC-TWIX and IUCN and the IOC and the adoption of a Plan of Work in January 2023 at the regional meeting in Mauritius. The Plan addresses four thematic areas, including legal aspects in relation to CITES, improved data base and analysis, detection and identification and management of seized species, each of which along four planks of actions: sharing of information, build



*Republic of Mauritius*

capacity and raise awareness, coordinate efforts and investigation and update and harmonise legislation.

26. The Conference calls for support for strengthened partnership and the full implementation of the Plan of Work.

\*\*\*\*\*

27. We, the Ministers and Senior Representatives:

- a) commend the Republic of Mauritius for organizing this high-level meeting on maritime security issues in the Western Indian Ocean;
- b) pledge to support the various initiatives discussed at this Ministerial Conference; and
- c) strongly encourage all participating States and organisations to implement the recommendations of the present Declaration.

This Ministerial Declaration on Maritime Security and Safety in Western Indian Ocean is adopted by acclamation this 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at Balaclava, Republic of Mauritius.

DRAFT