

EUROPEAN SHIPPING INDUSTRY CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE AND SUSTAINED ACTION TO ENSURE MARITIME SECURITY IN THE GULF OF GUINEA

Piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea have reached alarming levels. It is high time European policy makers improve the situation for vessels and crew operating in this area through a number of methods. The poor security situation is jeopardising trade and development in the region and globally.

According to the *ICC International Maritime Bureau's 2018 Annual Report on Piracy and Armed Robbery against ships*, the region evidenced continued levels of violence with 130 crew taken hostage and 78 kidnapped for ransom. Nigeria alone reported 41 crew kidnappings during the last three months of 2018, again placing Nigerian piracy as the major concern to the shipping industry. In total, the Gulf of Guinea accounted for 79 attacks in 2018. In 2019 (figures until September) the region remains a kidnap hotspot with 57 crew kidnapped and 42 being taken hostage.

These figures demonstrate that in the Gulf of Guinea especially the waters off Nigeria are increasingly dangerous for seafarers.

Maritime insecurity disrupts trade flows and has a direct impact on the ability of ports to serve as hubs for parts of the continent. A poor security situation imposes additional, high costs on imports and exports and thus jeopardises jobs and economic activity.

Maritime transport is key to Africa's connectivity, trade and development. In that perspective, as efficient maritime transport is critical to the region's trade and economic growth, maritime security is a prerequisite for fostering and securing that growth.

Shipping companies do their utmost to ensure the security of their crew, vessels and cargo. They will continue to support awareness and preparedness of governments by reporting incidents, currently this is done into the French and UK MDAT GoG (Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade - Gulf of Guinea) and follow best practices as put forward in the "Global Counter Piracy Guidance for Companies, Masters and Seafarers" (Global Best Management Practices).



ECSA is a trade association representing the national shipowners' associations of the EU and Norway. The European shipowners control 40% of the global commercial fleet. ECSA promotes the interests of European shipping so that the industry can best serve European and international trade in a competitive free business environment to the benefit of shippers and consumers.

European shipowners are of the view that authorities have to step up their efforts. The following measures will improve the security situation in this area:

1. Engagement of the EU with the Gulf of Guinea governments in order to find a solution on the ground. The EU should put maritime security high on the agenda of partnership and trade agreements, as well as other forms of cooperation with African partners.
2. Active contribution of the EU Member States to the maritime security outside the territorial waters in cooperation with regional states e.g. by deployment of warships.
3. Establishment of a SHADE-GoG as a mechanism to increase information sharing and coordinate anti-piracy operations off Nigeria and in the wider Gulf of Guinea.
4. A high-level international response, similar to the Contact Group on Piracy off the coast of Somalia.
5. Support for international initiatives through international organisations such as the IMO and the G7++ Friends of the Gulf of Guinea (G7++FoGG) forum.
6. The continuation of the EU GoGIN project (Inter-regional Network for the Gulf of Guinea) which facilitates the cooperation between the 19 GoG coastal countries.
7. The EU to call upon and support coastal states on issues such as:
 - Effective judicial systems, good coordination of law enforcement assets and well working reporting and coordination system to respond to incidents.
 - Strengthening of the local coastguards.
 - Effective implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct (CoC) concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against ships and Illicit Maritime Activity in the West and Central Africa (2013) and the Lomé Charter on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa (2016) by the signatory states.
 - Promotion of maritime training and local maritime know how and alignment with international standards, such as IMO and STCW.
8. In case that the signatory States to the Yaoundé Code of Conduct (2013) are not in position to repress piracy and armed robbery against ships in their territorial waters, the use of Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel (PCASP) should be re-considered by the respective authorities of the littoral states, in order to allow ships to embark armed guards under specific conditions and prerequisites respecting the UNCLOS provisions as well as the requirements imposed by the respective national legislation.



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