Third Ministerial Conference on Maritime Security and Safety
Mauritius, 16 November 2023

SCOPING NOTE

The Western Indian Ocean (WIO) has a considerable traditional and non-traditional blue economy growth potential. The seas nurture growth and render key environmental services. The oceans and seas are of vital importance for transportation, livelihood, food and a range of other ecosystem goods and services. The case needs no more be made that the WIO is worth investing in and protecting. There is shared interest in promoting maritime security and safety for both the region and the international community which has the financial, technological and human capacity for the development of Blue Economy. Maritime security and safety are therefore a shared need for the welfare and prosperity of the world. All States should have a fair share of the benefits from a safer and more secure ocean, and they should also share equally the responsibility for addressing major threats and challenges to maritime security and safety.

Threats from the ocean are emerging and developing in the region and include transnational organised crime, notably illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU), human trafficking, organised illegal immigration, weapons smuggling and terrorism. Pollution and toxic waste dumping threats to biodiversity weigh on the security of regional States. Drug trafficking as from the Horn of Africa is particularly important. The WIO remains vulnerable to the possible impact of insecurity on transport and maritime infrastructures, the effects of climate change or natural or man-made disasters. These threats take on a geopolitical nature and are particularly complex because of their transnational nature and connections.

The fight against piracy has shown that individually, the regional states cannot address the challenges, especially as the maritime security threats are interconnected. Regional and international cooperation in the maritime field appears as the only way to ensuring long-term maritime security and safety. The region needs an adapted, modern, efficient and affordable maritime security and safety architecture.

Given the sensitivities around the issues relating to maritime security and safety, there is need for a government level dialogue for mobilising, engaging and perpetuating long-term actions in respect of sovereignty and in line with the shared interests of regional states and the international community.

It is in the above context that Mauritius took the initiative to provide a platform for political debate and discussions that would eventually enable concrete actions for improving maritime capability in the region. Mauritius thus organised, in collaboration with the Indian Ocean Commission, a Ministerial Conferences on Maritime Security in April 2018 and a follow-up in June 2019. These contributed to initiating concrete measures for enhancing maritime domain awareness in the region. In order to maintain the momentum for a safer Indian Ocean, the third Ministerial Conference on Maritime Security and safety on 16th November 2023 will focus on progress so far on the following:

1. Implementation of the past, 2018, 2019, Ministerial Conferences’ outcomes;
2. Regional prevention and preparedness against marine pollution;
3. Regional cooperation on the combat against Drugs and Substance Abuse;
4. UNSC Resolution 2608 and the Contact Group on Illicit Maritime Activities;
5. Regional Plan against Illegal Wildlife Traffic;
6. Regional policy/framework for ports security and safety of navigation; and
7. The establishment of an African Coast Guards Forum
1. Implementation of the 2018 and 2019 Ministerial Conferences’ Outcomes

The Conference is invited to take note of the steps taken to implement the previous Conferences’ outcomes and consider partnership and support and overall coordination for achieving optimal results. The Conference should recognise that implementation of the identified measures should constitute a collective responsibility.

In 2018, two agreements were signed paving the way for the establishment of a Maritime Security Architecture (MSA) with its operational arms, the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre and the Regional Centre for Operational Coordination. The 2nd Conference adopted a Declaration with 55 recommendations. Several regional and international actors have been dealing with the implementation of these recommendations which should be followed by improved flow of information and synergies among stakeholders and a better understanding of linkages among illicit maritime activities.

More importantly, the recommendations should be implemented in a coherent and coordinated manner so as to avoid duplication and ensure achieving results to significantly improve maritime security and safety in the WIO. In fact, there are many capacity building projects, each implemented in with a silo approach without taking into consideration the absorption capacity of the beneficiary region. The limited human resource base, the sparsely allocated responsibilities of the key actors in charge for maritime security and safety, the limited use of updated technology significantly limits the region’s project absorption capacity as described below.

National level fragmentation: It should be recognized that countries in the region have limited resources, and that among those limited resources, several competing security and safety priorities exist. Countries have either extensive coastline with hundreds of kilometres of isolated and unpatrolled beaches and coastlines or large exclusive economic zones (EEZ) while their maritime capability is limited and outdated.

The countries cannot afford to have a sustained mechanism to address every single maritime security and safety challenge.

There is a lack of national level strategies to focus on priority maritime security and safety challenge and orient resources towards that end. The existing mechanisms to address maritime security and safety at national levels have not evolved much since decades, if not centuries. They have a narrow focus, resulting in several national agencies created, and missions developed with overlapping mandates, each working in isolation, while the work of one may be relevant to another agency with the result that there is no overall complete picture nor an understanding of criminal patterns of behaviour, making prevention and disruption of crimes very difficult. Given the state of governance structures and socio-economic opportunities in the region, one crime can flourish, while deterrence mechanisms dedicated to another type of crime are applied. There are confirmed cases of fishing vessels engaged in arms, drug or human trafficking. To guarantee sustainable maritime security and safety, it is necessary to address the interconnected nature of maritime crime, and to effectively counter the ballooning effect. There are already multiple institutions, agreements, forums and instruments dealing with each type of illicit maritime activity. The challenge is not a lack of initiatives, but that they create, or risk creating, gaps and overlaps, if not reviewed carefully, leading to duplication and non-optimal use of resources. While the public administrations have limited capacity and resources but engaged in several competing projects. It is therefore no surprise that these initiatives result with minimal impact. The challenge is therefore to
streamline their mandates and activities to make the best use of existing potential and to achieve appropriate goals.

There is need, on both the national and regional levels, to have clear and well-defined strategies and institutional structures within an integrated mechanism for maritime security and safety.

The MSA is new to the region and innovative internationally. To promote this ambitious model. It is necessary to support it for some time yet. It is based in particular on the assumption that the national centres are adequately equipped, both in terms of technology and staff quality, and that they operate within a well-coordinated and organised national structure because, at present, there are still major limitations.

The MSA has reached what can be termed as the Initial Operational Phase and it requires adequate collaboration with the National Centres and other regional and international Centres to (i) defining specific zones for identification of VOIs, followed (ii) by inspection and (iii) prosecution (legal finish). There are various reasons for the current situation which can be summarised as follows:

a) The most important one being the sparsely distributed authorities for the management of maritime zones to several departments and ministries with no overall individual or collective responsibility or accountability designated.

b) It is found that there is a lack/absence of national strategies for maritime security and safety, inadequate national frameworks with each department/Ministry operating in silos leading to lack of internal coordination, non-optimal use of available resources, all of which resulting in weak maritime enforcement institutions.

c) There is still a lack of adequately trained personal and dedicated to maritime security and safety, the current ones using archaic systems.

d) There is limited Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) and absence of use of new technologies for management of maritime zones.

e) Sea blindness is a reality and there is a perpetuation of land-based economic growth strategies. While Blue/Ocean Economy is being promoted, the national level structures and institutions have not followed suit to keep pace for achieving any result in this area.

f) Existing programmes, most often than not, are not implemented on the national institutions’ absorption capacities, thus impacting heavily on ownership and appropriation, affecting willingness to progress.

g) There is a clear lack of legal base for improving maritime security and safety. The legal finish is clearly either outdated or absent and it is interesting to note that this has been made feasible for prosecuting pirates by Kenya, Mauritius, and Seychelles.

The base for improved maritime security and safety rests on significantly improving national maritime capability. This includes the establishment of functioning national mechanisms to enhance maritime security and safety including National Maritime Security and Safety Strategies, the establishment of multi-agency National Maritime Security and Safety Committees for co-ordination of activities between the departments, agencies, control authorities, and other organizations of the State, port operators, companies and other entities concerned, facilitated by the establishment of National Information Sharing and Coordination Centers capable of enhancing information sharing and improving inter agency cooperation and coordination.

WIO countries have vast EEZ with limited maritime and aerial assets for inspection of vessels. Thus, the mobilisation of assets becomes very costly for small administrations. This is why the IOC made provision
for a financial incentive for regionally coordinated actions at sea. A financial mechanism has been established and agreed with the six MASE Agreements Signatory countries for the use of a total of sixteen maritime and four aerial assets. This enables pooling of scarce assets and maritime crime in one maritime zone can be inspected in another. The system has been tested to facilitate regional and international cooperation in accordance with the provisions of the MASE Agreements, i.e. the assets remain under the responsibility of the country concerned. Furthermore, a partnership has been signed with EUNAFOR to assist in inspection. Other partnerships are being considered such as with CMF and other neighbouring countries. The initial fund that has been created under MASE for an amount of EUR 3.6 million implemented through grant contracts, designed, concluded and monitored by the IOC, so as to cover for additional costs as compared to purely national actions. It is necessary to maintain this support.

Assessments on the legal finish relating to maritime crimes are in progress in the region. This includes the jurisdiction with regard to incidents of maritime crimes, the laws of evidence, the laws of criminal proceeding and the existence of extradition treaties and/or of mutual legal assistance between the regional signatories. Provisions are made for judicial reforms and capacity building aimed at removing obstacles in the fight against maritime crimes along the intervention chain (information, intervention, prosecution, custody).

**Deepening regional cooperation**

The MASE Architecture constitutes a strong, modern and regionally owned maritime security mechanism and is contributing to the implementation of the 2050 Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy of the African Union as well as ensuring complementarity with other initiatives such as the Djibouti Code of Conduct-JA with which it is already exchanging on how best to cooperate and ensure synergies with a focus on the national level capacity building as per above, but also for the use of the MASE regional Centres. Furthermore, there is a need to coordinate within the CGIMA and explore the opportunities for contributing to its work paving the way for a sustained mechanism to deter piracy.

**Operational Cooperation Framework at International level**

In order to proceed, there is need to establish an Operational Cooperation Framework for each maritime security and safety challenge and operationalise around the WIO MASE Architecture targeting strengthened institutional governance towards a minimal regional maritime security and safety capability. Some priority areas of operational cooperation frameworks are proposed below.
2. Regional prevention and preparedness against marine pollution

The grounding of MV Wakashio three years ago, and the various incidents of vessels since then in the region are a vivid reminder of the vulnerability of the region w.r.t marine pollution. Recent incidents suggest that risks related to marine pollution perpetuate and are even increasing with time. Each country in the region needs to ensure readiness and preparedness against marine pollution through the availability of the necessary technical, human and financial resources. Given that no State can claim to deal alone with a spill of Tier II level and above, it is imperative to promote cooperation for the establishment of a collective mechanism for prevention and preparedness against marine pollution in the region together with regional and international interested parties. This collective mechanism would then enable the pooling of the limited resources available in the region and access international support to effectively act on a pollution event as fast as possible.

The Ministerial Conference is invited to support the avoidance of a multiplicity of actions and support 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
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.

b) Support for capacity building for auditing equipment, logistical, personnel and technical resources available within countries to support pollution incidents, identifying and accessing the ‘tools’ (satellite imagery, oil spill modelling, metocean 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, IMO, EU, salvors, offshore installation operators and spill response organizations) than can be established to ensure a coordinated response.

c) Work towards the establishing of a Tier II & III regional/international technical and human resource capability on the basis of an agreed mechanism and availability and willingness for provision of equipment and man-power suitable for the requirements to deal with a pollution in the region as per the request

Major issues
1. The bedrock of an effective mechanism against marine pollution remains the national level preparedness and response systems. This is a prerequisite and immutable.

It is important to realise that left alone, a country may not develop a national system, nor will it regularly update it to adapt to the changing circumstances. There is a strong belief that accidents happen elsewhere and so, resource prioritisation leads to other pressing needs. A complementary approach is to support countries on the basis of willingness for actions in this area in a stepwise and incremental manner. In fact, one of the most important actions needed is the national risks assessment (hotspots, environmental sensitivities, oil spill sensitivity mapping) and that for prevention and preparedness against marine pollution. A major part of such an assessment could be done by the RETOS assessment to be followed by an update of the national plans, which then would enable the region to collectively adopt a regional plan.
Taking the above into consideration, there is need for a regional actor (or a combination of actors) to promote a collective practical approach to lead the process. It is in this context that the IOC has ensured that the MASE Agreements make provision for addressing marine pollution. The IOC has also been engaging with the Nairobi Convention and IMO to keep the momentum towards the establishment of an operational regional mechanism. It is in the same spirit that following the signed MoU between the IOC and IORA, that the IOC has approached the latter.

2. Coherency and complementary approach
There is need to avoid the multiplicity of regional frameworks and programmes. There is already the framework under the International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Cooperation (OPRC) and the Nairobi Convention and its Emergency Protocol. All actors should propose and develop cooperation in alignment to this framework.

3. Practical actions towards a regional preparedness and response system
The MASE Agreements makes specific provision for addressing marine pollution. It is in this context that the MASE Agreements Steering Committee adopted a Work Plan on 5th May 2021 and agreed to work with the larger Eastern and Southern African countries and partners, such as the Nairobi Convention and IMO for its implementation. The 5th MASE Steering Committee had agreed to pursue the work based on past achievements and regional projects/initiatives, including the regional 'Oil Spill Response' project (1999 - 2004) and the ‘Maritime Highway’ project (2008 - 2012); funded by the World Bank and implemented by the Indian Ocean Commission. Progress has been slow for various reasons, mainly due to lack of a dedicated programme. The lack of dedicated funds has hampered progress in the implementation of the MASE POLMAR Plan of Work. Covid-19 has both raised awareness of, and fast-tracked the use of, virtual collaborative technology. Used in conjunction with the traditional coordination undertaken by physical centre(s), there is scope for the region to find a creative cost-effective solution to develop a coordination mechanism. The use of virtual collaboration has been mooted already and not rejected. A series of work is being held involving the relevant authorities of MASE Signatories and neighbouring States, partners and regional/international organisations such as the Nairobi Convention and the IMO/OPRC involved in preventing and combating pollution at sea. This includes:

1. The Regional Coordination Operations Centre (RCOC) has organised a Tabletop Exercise (TTX) - WIOPOLREX 23 -on the 25th to 27th July 2023. This regionally driven Table-Top exercise (TTX) has raised awareness on the issue and at national level of the information need to populate the regional contingency plan’s appendices, has tested the POLREP alert and communication system, identified lessons learned and the potential for improvement and enabled the region to collectively reflect on the concrete actions ahead.
2. The above was used to further improve the draft Regional Contingency Plan for consideration at a workshop on the 29-30 August 2023.
3. A simulation exercise, also called Field Training Exercise (FTX) was held on 25-29 September 2023 to test the plans, assess the technical and human capacities and formulate cooperation modalities. This event enabled consultation among representatives of WIO neighbouring governments as well as the International Community and partners on progress achieved so far on MARPOL, specifically on a Regional Contingency Plan, potential regional coordination Structures and modalities and provide orientation for the way forward, including mobilisation of the necessary technical and financial support. The FTX has established the base for the establishment of an effective and practical regional/international emergency coordination and cooperation mechanism based on existing frameworks and for the region to be adequately capacitated to prevent and be prepared against maritime pollution, especially oil spill.
3. Regional cooperation on the combat against Drugs and Substance Abuse

The Conference is invited to discuss the outcome of the 1st Regional Conference on Drugs and Substance Abuse and consider concrete partnership and implementation support in areas as identified below.

Mauritius organized the first regional Conference on drugs and substance abuse on 26-28 April 2023. This Conference gathered representatives from Comoros, Djibouti, France/Reunion, Madagascar, Republic of Mauritius, Seychelles, Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa, as well as from the Indian Ocean Commission, the Regional Maritime Information fusion Centre, the Regional Centre for Operations Coordination, the European Union, the United States of America and the United Nations Office.

The Conference concluded on the need to join efforts and reinforce regional cooperation for promoting States institutions mandates in addressing drug trafficking, substance abuse and addiction. The Conference acknowledged that the fight against drugs requires a holistic, integrated, transversal approach and regional cooperation in following four main pillars:

1. **Prevention** measures through sensitization, education and capacity building of stakeholders in the society as well as through community outreach;
2. **Break the supply chain by tracking** drug traffickers and their networks, exchange of information, police, customs and reinforced judicial cooperation among countries and at the regional level when possible;
3. **The health and social aspects**, with exchanges of best practices and development and implementation of appropriate treatments, specialised medical care of addictions and training of health and social professionals.
4. **A strengthened regional and International Cooperation, coordination as well as political commitment and accountability**:
   - the challenges related to drugs trafficking and substance abuse concern all countries and cannot be solved by a country alone, requiring improved cooperation and that issues of common concern should be addressed collectively;
   - lessons could be learnt from shared experiences,
   - regional strategic response and improved cooperation among countries can bring added value to efforts already undertaken at national levels.

On the way forwards, the conference agreed the followings:

1. Establish a Regional Cooperation Framework to address illicit drugs and substance abuse in a comprehensive and holistic way. The framework would synergize the efforts, to seek a common approach and exchange of best practices, in particular to reduce demand for drugs (through prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and aftercare) and tackling the consequential damages associated with illicit drugs and substance abuse, and to fight against drug trafficking for preserving peace and stability of societies of the States.
2. Encouraged all countries in the region to develop and implement their national drug strategy and/or action plans with clear monitoring and evaluation framework.
3. As a first step, set-up a Regional Network of National bodies responsible for coordinating drug response. This Network should meet and discuss regularly to promoting regional cooperation, dialogue and exchanges against drugs and substance abuse and the establishment of a regional drug Observatory.

It was agreed to organize a Ministerial Conference specifically on drugs and substance abuse in 2024.
4. UNSC Resolution 2608 and the Contact Group on Illicit Maritime Activities

The Conference is invited to exchange on the lessons from CGPCS, on whether the gains are permanent, whether the model could be used for addressing other maritime security and safety threats and discuss the future for CGIMA

Piracy off the coast of Somalia reached its peak during the end of the 1st decade of the current century costing the world economy to an estimated US$ 7-12 billion according to reports from Oceans Beyond Piracy and increasing trade costs estimated to US$ 18 billion according to the World Bank. This led to the UN Security Council Resolution 1851 (2008), which concluded in the need to establish a Contact Group against Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CG). The CGPCS was an informal multilateral mechanism with an open and flexible structure. The CGPCS can be classified as a global success in containing piracy within four years, given that no commercial vessel has been captured since a decade and the last of the estimated 3639 hostages released in September 2020. Yet, piracy is not eradicated and the root causes in Somalia remain, pirate leaders, known as kingpin, still have not faced trial, and the capacity within the region to deal with piracy continues to be weak. After twenty-four plenary Sessions of the CGPCS, the members decided to change it to the Contact Group against Illicit Maritime Activities (CGIMA) in 2023.

It is thought that the CGPCS has been successful for the following reasons:

1. The CGPCS enabled inclusive, focussed and coordinated actions by the international community, both operational and political.
2. It facilitated collective maritime security operations at sea coordinated through the Shared Awareness (SHADE) mechanism comprised of the Combined Maritime Forces, the EU Naval Operation Atalanta and a wide range of independent deployers.
3. It enabled the coordination and funding for the prosecution of pirates undertaken by Seychelles, Kenya and Mauritius.
4. It strengthened the cooperation with the shipping industry and their self-defensive measures.

It is worth noting that the 23rd CGPCS Plenary (2020) established and tasked a Strategic Planning Steering Group (SPSG) to develop a strategic plan that would ensure the CGPCS remains an “agile mechanism [...] embedded in a long-term strategy for the region”. The SPSG, chaired by Seychelles and after ten working sessions, presented its report to the last CGPCS Plenary Session and proposed the new contact group to become an agile platform for international strategic dialogue on illicit maritime activities in the region under the widened mandate.

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2608 (2021) brought a change to the specific mandate and actions of some of the members of the CGPCS. Kenya presided over the last two Plenary sessions of the CGPCS. Kenya chaired and hosted a successful 24th and last session of the Contact Group against Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) and enabling its transformation into the Contact Group on Illicit Maritime Activities (CGIMA). As implied by the name, the group now discusses the full spectrum of maritime threats and risks in the region.

This new focus of CGIMA (with technical concerned key stakeholders) converges well with that of the current Ministerial platform (more of policy-oriented nature) provided by the Republic of Mauritius. Both should provide complementary high-level dialogues to address maritime security and safety in the region to be followed by concrete actionable measures.
5. Regional Plan against Illegal Wildlife Traffic

The Conference is invited to take note of the outcome of the plan of work as agreed at the January IOC-TRAFFIC meeting and consider partnership and support for implementation

COUNTERING ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRAFFIC

Trade in wild species of fauna and flora is one of the world's most pressing conservation challenges, affecting millions of people and thousands of wild species. The trafficking and unsustainable trade in wildlife commodities are causing unprecedented declines in some of the world's most charismatic, as well as some lesser-known, wildlife species. The Southwest Indian Ocean is no exception to these global trends.

The Indian Ocean hosts one of the 34 biodiversity hotspots globally. The region's exceptional natural wealth attracts the transnational criminal networks that are behind wildlife trafficking that, in some cases, also converges with other criminal activities such as the smuggling of precious minerals etc. Wildlife trafficking is a very lucrative criminal business that poses a serious threat to biological diversity and undermines the livelihoods of local communities who depend on it. On the one hand, the region is home to exceptional biodiversity of marine and terrestrial species, characterised by high rates of endemism. On the other hand, it is a key link in the wildlife trade route between Africa and Asia.

The criminal networks behind the illegal trade in wild species are highly organised and share an ability to circumvent law enforcement and override international borders. Experience shows that it takes a network to fight a network.

Against this backdrop, TRAFFIC works with enforcement agencies along supply chains to ensure that illegal wildlife trade is detected, identified, prevented, and prosecuted at every opportunity. TRAFFIC is actively supporting the running and establishment of information exchange networks (called TWIXes - Trade in Wildlife Information eXchange platforms) throughout the world – including SADC-TWIX, a network established in 2019 for SADC Member States. In 2018, IUCN and the IOC Secretariat signed a Memorandum of Understanding in which both organisations agreed to work together on wildlife trade in its legal and illegal dimensions.

It is in this context that the Indian Ocean Commission joined TRAFFIC to organise a regional meeting in January 2023 to strengthen coordinated efforts against the illegal wildlife trade. The meeting gathered 50 participants including law enforcement officials from IOC and SADC countries, Kenya and Djibouti, representing Wildlife and Forest authorities, Fisheries authorities, Police and Gendarmerie authorities, Customs authorities, Port authorities, and in some cases Military authorities. There were also representatives from the MASE regional centres, TRAFFIC Southern Africa, and TRAFFIC Europe. The meeting enabled participants to understand the many linkages between Illegal Wildlife Traffic issues and maritime security and the identification of the common challenges which include limited or lack of national framework for inter-agency coordination and information-sharing, lack of guidelines on which entity should prosecute which type of offence and lack of communication and conflicts of competence between entities. The specific challenges are grouped in the four following thematic areas:

Legislation which includes absence of adequate legislation/regulation specifically related to CITES and that the legal framework may be poorly understood by practitioners.
**Data:** lack of centralized seizures database and/or maintenance thereof, insufficient and scattered data sitting under different agencies, and in some cases, an underreporting of import/export data on the trade in CITES species.

**Detection and identification:** limited capabilities to conduct proactive intelligence-based investigations, limited capabilities to detect and inspect private aircraft/vessels, limited capacity for the positive identification of seized specimens that support legal proceedings.

**Management of seized specimens:** absence of quarantine centres for live specimens and difficulties in repatriating seized specimens.

The meeting concluded actions in the following four areas:

1.0 Share information

**Short term:**
- Establish a working group between the IOC Secretariat, the two regional centres (RMIFC and RCOC), and TRAFFIC (incl. TWIX) through an MoU to specifically look at information sharing possibilities and supporting a centralized database such as SADC-TWIX and identify ways in which countries may work together moving forward. This includes understanding and uptake of the information sharing mechanisms that are already in place (e.g. TWIX)
- Participating countries to encourage and ensure ongoing communication between RMIFC liaison officers and each country’s CITES Management Authority, in order to facilitate cross-border information-sharing related to wildlife trade through the RMIFC.
- Define the RMIFC’s role in terms of data collection and data sharing.
- RMIFC to circulate a monthly update on IWT incidents to all IOC countries, which should also be shared on the TWIX networks.
- Seek membership to the relevant TWIX network for all countries as well as for the IOC Secretariat, and encourage national liaisons officers to the RMIFC and RCOC to register as TWIX users
- Encourage countries to submit seizures data to the relevant TWIX network, and to seek assistance with this where needed (training is available from TWIX staff to assist with seizures data management and submission for the CITES Annual Illegal Trade Report)

**Medium term:**
- Quantitatively assess IWT in the sub-region and clarify IWT dynamics and trends. Develop an action plan based on this research.
- Develop regional guidance on data collection standards & rules to support countries towards establishing better practices in this area. These guidelines would aim to identify the types of data owners and stakeholders, types of data sources, types of information to be collected (What type of information should be collected for SADC-TWIX and what type of data for the RMIFC? Are these identical?), checks and controls, filters, standards for information-sharing with international organisations and partners, among other aspects.
- Train all TWIX focal points and TWIX users from the region on how to use TWIX resources and tools.
- Include the CITES Management Authority and Scientific Authority from each participating country on the findings of the IWT dynamics and trends (if not already involved).
Long term:
- Each participating country to consider establishing a specific national database on IWT where the focal points from each country feed into a centralized database, where relevant.
- Involve universities and research outlets in the collection and analysis of data.
- Promote new partnerships with scientific institutions and research outlets.

2.0 Build capacity and raise awareness

2.1. Build capacity

Short term:
- Develop a list of officials and/or experts who have capacity in specific areas (e.g. species identification, forensics etc.) These lists would be maintained on the TWIX platforms. Engagement from subject experts should be encouraged and facilitated where possible.

Medium term:
- Develop reporting protocols for seizure events to ensure we do not only report seizures, but also the circumstances surrounding IWT incidents e.g., origin of specimens, modus operandi, sales price, etc.
- Analyse trends, set up risk indicators and red flags, and feedback this information to law enforcement officers to enhance detection efforts. These should be shared timeously through the existing communication mechanisms (e.g. TWIX).
- Develop a specialised regional training modules on IWT law enforcement.
- Build capacity of law enforcement for the identification, rescue, and rehabilitation of seized specimens, using workshops, online training and exchange programmes (note: online trainings are already conducted via the TWIX platforms. Attendance and content creation at the TWIX events should be encouraged).

2.2. Raise awareness

Medium term:
- Develop sensitisation material on protected species aimed at the general public, including information on the offences/penalties associated with IWT.
- Engage airlines and airport stakeholders towards developing targeted advocacy initiatives on IWT for passengers, airline staff, and airport-based law enforcement. The IOC Secretariat suggests leveraging the existing partnership (i.e. working committee) with national flag carriers to explore the possibility of promoting specific airline work on IWT. Support should also be sought from civil aviation authorities to ensure uptake of awareness campaigns by/in airports.
- Build, co-ordinate and reinforce existing networks and work with other private sector associations e.g. regional port association, Cap Business (private sector representative body), among others.
3.0 Co-ordinate efforts and investigations

3.1. Inter-agency coordination at national level

Medium term:
- Countries to consider setting up coordinated border management units at national level, where such units do not currently exist, linking to the National Maritime Information Sharing Centre (already established or in the process of establishment), to improve processes for the inspection of imports and exports, profiling of suspicious vessels/flights and increase detection rates.
- Develop guidance on how to set up such coordinated border management units and national IWT Task Force, based on experience of other countries in the region and beyond. Consider developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) based on success stories, good practices and lessons learnt.

3.2. Cross border coordination

Medium term:
- Consider establishing a permanent unit or platform to provide technical support to IOC countries for investigations and prosecutions (something similar to what is planned for the next phase of the MASE programme).
- Leverage the existing SADC protocol on Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) and extradition in criminal matters to enhance cooperation in the field of prosecutions and judicial proceedings.
- Encourage bilateral coordination where relevant to facilitate the repatriation of specimens (no need for a specific protocol). Explore the possibility to dovetail coordinated operations under the MASE programme with repatriation efforts where relevant.

4.0 Update and harmonise legislation

Legislative reform is an objective for the medium and long term, although specific work should be undertaken in the short term as well. Participants agreed that harmonising national legislations would be a complex and lengthy endeavour.

Short term:
- Share legal experts within the region. Enable countries to have access to legal experts from each country, with support from the IOC Secretariat and TWIX. Liaison officers within the two regional centres may play a role in facilitating discussions between legal experts.
- Encourage countries to contribute to the digital repositories of national legislations on IWT, hosted in the TWIX websites. Countries should work with TWIX staff to ensure that all relevant legislation is available and up to date.

Short to Medium term
- Establish a dedicated regional working group to identify gaps and challenges with the legislation and make suggestions on the way forward. Alternatively, broaden the mandate and composition of the existing regional working group on biodiversity, and consider inviting legal experts to present on gaps and challenges (via ad hoc meetings or a specific subgroup). Based on the recommendations of the regional working group, set up national working groups -where relevant- to identify issues with the legislation and regulation at national level. Look at CITES legislation in conjunction with the suite of legislation that addresses transnational organised crime and maritime crime. Produce a country-specific legal assessment and gap analysis where necessary and relevant.

The Conference is invited to support the initiative of the region to develop and adopt a Regional Policy on Ports Security and Safety of Navigation

While trade is crucial to African economies, (though accounting for approximately only 2.7% of global trade by value) the continent contributes much higher share to global seaborne trade – 7% and 5% of maritime exports and imports by volume, respectively. Oil, gas and mineral resources account for more than 75% of Africa’s exports. For maritime transport to be efficient, well-functioning ports are crucial. The WIO is one of the busiest maritime routes and its importance for global trade and economy in terms of cargo traffic and oil shipment cannot be ignored.

Though Africa’s shipping and ports do not always match global trends and standards, its ports are a central and necessary component for safety of navigation and in facilitating global trade. Maritime security depends to a large extent on the level of ports security which in turn can either hinder or promote economic growth, safety and freedom of navigation, wellbeing of passengers and crews on board ships, marine biodiversity, food security and energy supply. This requires adequate compliance with international maritime conventions and pertinent IMO instruments, and enforcement of, the provisions of SOLAS chapter XI-2 and the ISPS Code as well as with regards to emergency preparedness and processes of self-assessing the port facility implementation of Port Facility Security Plans.

The region should be able to anticipate and predict vessel movements, facilitate improved management of coastal safety, counter pollution and ensure the security of resources, including:
1. International Ship & Port Security (ISPS Code)
2. Port State Control (PSC)
3. Pollution prevention and management
4. Contingency planning
5. Search and Rescue
6. Traffic planning, efficiency & management
7. Vessels inspections.

Safety of navigation is dependent on the level of security in connecting port. There is therefore a need to pursue an active foreign policy, working with countries in the region to strengthen collaboration who commit to safety of navigation in compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). In this respect the collaboration with the Indian Ocean Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control is good and should the member countries with a dedicated system on Port State Control inspections record, mentoring and capacity building to develop operational procedures for inspections on board of SOLAS vessels and specific procedures for accident investigation.

There is recognition that the WIO region has limited domestication of IMO Conventions towards its implementation at national levels which is challenging due to lack in financial resources, skilled personnel, technical expertise and proper control.

There is limited multi-agency cooperation. There is need to bring together national maritime affairs authorities, port authorities and law enforcement officials involved with safety of navigation, security of port facilities and exchange maritime data and information on vessels through an inter-agency cooperation approach both at national and regional levels.
The African Union’s (AU) Integrated Maritime Strategy 2050 (AIMS 2050) recognizes that Africa’s maritime ports are small to handle large vessels and recommends the setting up of infrastructures and support equipping shippers, to include: single windows, logistic platforms, dry docks, warehouses, satellite tracking of containers.

It is worth noting that piracy off the coast of Somalia has resulted in some good initiatives in the interest of safety of navigation, among which the ‘New York Declaration’, a commitment to Best Management Practices by vessels, guidelines for seafarers’ welfare, especially for kidnapped seafarers and their families, and guidance to private maritime security companies.

In the above context that a major capacity building initiative has been launched to improve ports security and safety of navigation in Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, and the Indian Ocean, funded by the EU. This Programme is implemented by the Indian Ocean Commission, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

One major action under the PSP is to define a set of baselines (indicators) on the compliance on relating conventions and agree on targets to formulate a regional policy on ports security and safety of navigation. for consideration by a Ministerial Conference for validation.
7. The establishment of an African Coast Guards Forum

The Conference is invited to take note of the outcome of the Moroni Declaration for Ocean under the purview of the African Union and the initiative to establish an African Coastal and Island States Coast Guard functions Forum (ACIS-CGFF) and consider partnership and support for implementation.

The Moroni Declaration for Ocean and Climate Action in Africa, 14th June 2023, 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 Blue Economy and the implementation of the AfCFTA 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, agreed to consider the organization of an annual forum of African Coast Guards to initiate a strengthened movement for Maritime Security and Safety in Africa.

Importance of Coast Guard Functions Forum: Exercising effective de jure and de facto sovereignty implies that the custodians of national security are able to exert surveillance in the totality of its Exclusive Economic Zones. While the responsibility is sparsely allocated among various ministries and departments, most, if not all, rely on the Coast Guards for actions at sea, whose functions include, among others:

1. Maritime Search and Rescue
2. Maritime Accident and Disaster Response
3. Ship Casualty and Maritime Assistance Services
4. Maritime Safety and Vessel Traffic Management
5. Maritime Security (Ship and Port)
6. Maritime Monitoring and Surveillance
7. Maritime Environmental Protection
8. Fisheries Inspection and Control
9. Maritime Customs Activities

It should however be recognized that due to the complex nature of maritime security and safety challenges combined by the lack of multi-agency approach prevents the CG from performing their tasks.

While the Japan Coast Guard initiative of the Coast Guard Global Summit (CGGS) is most welcome, the establishment of an African Coast Guard Functions Forum will enhance collaboration and cooperation between neighbouring Coast Guards for information sharing, capacity building, developing common level of operational standards and skills between coastguard functions bodies and for the planning and conducting effective joint operations with the following aims and objectives:

1. To facilitate cooperation in Coast Guard Functions.
2. To encourage the identification of common solutions through the sharing of best practices.
3. To promote the development of common technical-operational standards and training processes.

A peer review mechanism could facilitate the identification of collaborative actions and rationale of establishing the ACIS-CGFF, promote collaborative issues such as multi-agency, multinational operations and capacity-building among coast guards. This cooperation forum could enable national and regional coordination of work on specific aspects such as information sharing, analysis of risks at sea and capacity building, cyber-security, facilitating annual exercise on matters of common interest such as MARPOL.