



## Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea, 21 June 2023

Malta Statement delivered by Darren Camilleri, Political Coordinator of Malta to the United Nations, New York

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Thank you, President.

We welcome today's discussion, particularly since it marks the tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé Architecture, and thank Ghana for the initiative. I also thank ASG Pobee and the briefers for their valuable insights and important briefings.

Malta commends the ongoing work of the coastal States of the Gulf of Guinea, as well as the African Union, for taking concrete steps to address the issue of piracy, other organised crime, and maritime security in the region. In this regard, we recall the Communiqué of 19 December 2022 of the AU Peace and Security Council on Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea.

The ambition must be maintained and strengthened as we enter into the second decade of this cooperation. We must build on lessons learnt, and on the analysis of current weaknesses.

In this regard, a comprehensive review process of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct should be regionally led by the Gulf of Guinea States and regional organisations and structures, with the involvement of international partners



and other relevant stakeholders such as regional think-tanks, civil society groups and the private sector.

Enhanced coordination is required. Exchange of information and shared strategies are essential to assist coastal states in protecting their national waters.

The Yaoundé Architecture must also be underpinned by sustainable funding. This includes sufficient financing from the Member States and regional structures, as well as from international partners, to support the full operationalisation of the architecture.

The Gulf of Guinea countries should also strengthen their efforts to introduce robust legal frameworks to prosecute perpetrators of piracy, armed robbery, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and other crimes that obstruct maritime security in the region.

Without an effective legal framework, there can be no deterrence to the crimes committed. In this regard, we strongly commend the efforts of UNODC, and welcome the agreement reached by ECOWAS States on the Supplementary Act on the conditions of transfer of persons who are suspected of having committed acts of piracy.

The gains of the Yaoundé Architecture will not benefit the coastal communities unless they are sustainable. The drivers of piracy and other crimes are complex, impacted by the situation on land. They include



multidimensional factors, such as poverty, unemployment, inadequate access to public services, security threats, legal and jurisdictional deficiencies, and corruption. Climate change and other environmental threats must not be underestimated, either. In this context, we welcome the recent consensual adoption of the BBNJ agreement.

Our response to those drivers must be multidimensional, through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It is only by adopting a comprehensive, holistic and inclusive solution that we can sustainably address the problem. Education and economic opportunities, including for women and youth of coastal communities, are essential.

The European Union adopted a strategy for the Gulf of Guinea which reflects a long-lasting engagement at all levels: the need to address socioeconomic development, institutional and legal frameworks, as well as defence and security aspects. Besides the various projects, including on maritime domain awareness, the EU has increased naval presence through the Coordinated Maritime Presences, with the continuous presence of at least one ship in the Gulf of Guinea throughout the year.

President

Before concluding, let me reaffirm Malta's strong belief that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried



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out, is an essential tool to achieve maritime security, including the repression of piracy. Ensuring full respect for UNCLOS is critical because the Convention lays down rules for the mutual benefit of all States.

The free and peaceful use of the seas and oceans, and their sustainability, is essential for all of us.

I thank you.