



EMBASSY OF DENMARK



Inaugural Workshop on the Establishment of the DCoC Working Group on Operational Cooperation and Coordination at Sea

Serena Beach Resort & Spa, Mombasa, Kenya

1-4 September 2025

3rd Statement delivered by UNODC Pooja Bissoonauthsing

"The Chief Guest, Commander Kenyan Navy, Major General Paul Otieno, His Excellency Ambassador Nicola Roy, the Chair of the DCoC, the Representative of the UNITAR, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, all protocols observed. The United Nations Office on Drug and Crime would like to express its appreciation to the IMO and, in particular, the DCoCJA Secretariat for organizing this event and the Republic of Kenya for hosting it.

Today, the focus is on the establishment of a working group on operational cooperation and coordination. I am fairly and cautiously confident that this proposed initiative is being welcomed and embraced by many, may be questioned by others, and yet may be a source of intrigue by many others. This is a praiseworthy EU-funded initiative and in compliance with the revised Code of Conduct concerning the repression of piracy, armed robbery against ships, and illicit maritime activity in the Western Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden area.

First and foremost, the working group three can only be as efficient as stakeholders would like it to be, and only if all those involved share the same vision. The inevitable challenge is to ensure that the shared and common vision to combat maritime crime is not inadvertently diluted, owing to variation in various countries. These national priorities may not be identical. They don't need to be similar in all states, but collectively, these should assist in the eradication of maritime crime at the national, regional, and international level.

Ladies and gentlemen, the working group three will be severely hindered if it is not able to obtain the support of international and regional organization and reinforcement. It's cooperation with national institutions. The aim of working group three is not to replace the supremacy of the state or to substitute itself as a collateral ad hoc arm of the state. Rather, it must support states in their collective efforts to combat all forms of maritime crime by securing political buy-in, promoting national ownership, reinforcing regional collaboration, cooperation, and the working group three is a perfect platform. It could be a perfect platform to showcase the need for enhanced collaboration, cooperation, and coordination among all actors involved in the criminal justice system in a bid to achieve the legal finish, a fragmented approach in our region to fight maritime crime is at best not acceptable anymore; at worst, doomed for If our weapons are to be cutting in their sharpness, close regional coordination and operation are essential.

We must endorse a united front as a region to tackle perpetrators of maritime crime are increasingly having recourse to the most sophisticated technology. Thus, it is important to identify gaps, to address weaknesses, to prioritize issues, all while not underestimating the inescapable fact that a lacuna in one country is tantamount to entitlements in the entire region. The diminutive effect is a, and we need to address that. I've stated before, too often to the uninitiated, that the success or failure of a case rests solely on the prosecution. Should it? Does it? From the moment of detection in conviction, there are so many innumerable actors involved in the criminal chain who have an equally important role.

Too often, and I said it before, sadly, we are so focused on the ultimate goal that we inadvertently underestimate the starting point. Can we detect? How do we? What are the resources at the disposal of the states?



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How do states optimize the use of the existing resources? But also, are those involved? At the start of the criminal justice system, cognizant of the complexities that we must overcome when we go to court. Are those involved at the end of the criminal chain justice system aware of the various pitfalls that have become a perennial feature when detecting such crime? This is why it is imperative to develop a detailed terms of reference, which factors in the need for a multifaceted approach.

Ladies and gentlemen, at the end of the criminal chain, the most important dominator— and we often forget them— it is the task of adjudication, which requires impeccable legal analysis and accountability; entails stringent. Penalties are severe punishments that must have a deterrent impact. Every judgment must buttress the fight against maritime crime; there is no one-size-fits-all formula for an effective coordination mechanism.

There is no one modus operandi; a textbook approach can only be useful to a limited extent. Even experiences can only be useful to a limited extent. There is no perfect crime, and there is no perfect case. And in the maritime sphere, until the intel is proven right, the following actions it is important to be ready for the unexpected. Regional and national maritime approaches, therefore, must deal with each other. Linkages need to be built on an intra-regional and inter-regional basis. The instrumental role of the DCoC is indisputable, and another collaboration today will generate a new momentum that even the vast ocean hopefully cannot.

We look forward to marching onward and forward together. The corpus of international law, I've said it many times with respect to maritime crime, is as vast as the sea. We must fight against the current that is the perpetrators' use of our legal framework as a lifebuoy, regardless of the ebb and flow, while strengthening our ship through cruise cooperation, collaboration, and coordination. And together we hopefully. will succeed and navigate our way through all obstacles till we reach the shore, hopefully with a clean legal finish. Thank you for your attention."

Based on Pooja Bishunath Singh's remarks, the IMO-DCoC/JA can take note of the following key points:

a. Operational and Institutional Coordination

Pooja Bishunath Singh emphasized that a fragmented approach to fighting maritime crime is no longer acceptable and is "doomed for" failure. The working group must, therefore, be a platform to reinforce collaboration and cooperation among all actors in the criminal justice system to achieve a "legal finish". This means ensuring that stakeholders involved from the moment of detection all the way to conviction are aware of the complexities and pitfalls of such cases. The working group should also prioritize identifying gaps and weaknesses, as a "lacuna in one country is tantamount to entitlements in the entire region". She urged for a multifaceted approach when developing a detailed Terms of Reference for the working group.

b. National Ownership and Political Buy-In

The working group's aim is not to replace the supremacy of the state. Instead, it must support states in their collective efforts to combat maritime crime by securing political buy-in and promoting national ownership. The working group's effectiveness is contingent on the collective vision of all stakeholders, even if their national priorities are not identical.



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c. Legal Framework and Deterrence

Singh highlighted that the "corpus of international law" for maritime crime is as vast as the sea. She stressed that the legal framework must be used as a "lifebuoy" against perpetrators who increasingly rely on sophisticated technology. She called for every judgment to "buttress the fight against maritime crime" by entailing stringent penalties and severe punishment that have a deterrent impact.
