

## **DAY 2: PANEL DISCUSSION 3**

### **UTILIZING THE DCOG ISN (INFORMATION SHARING NETWORK) TO SUPPORT OPERATIONS AT SEA AGAINST ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES – BUILDING ON GAINS FROM THE MASE EXPERIENCE**

**COL EVANS OGUGA, KENYA NAVY**

In highlighting gains within the DCoC Information Sharing Network that have supported the achievement of Article 2 of the Jeddah Amendments I wish to point out that the key achievements (3) have been on the following:

1. **First, on Information Sharing** which is one of the Central Pillars of the DCoC. Signatories are strongly encouraged to continue sharing relevant data about ship movements, suspicious activities, vessels of interest, and what is releasable related to potential threats through their National Maritime Information Sharing Centres. I further opine that establishing shared databases and national information centres can also enhance the collective ability to monitor and counter illegal activities at sea. National centres will be able to benefit from information on vessels of interest for effective law enforcement.
2. **The Second gain has been on Training and Capacity Building:** The DCoC emphasizes training of maritime personnel and enhancing the operational capacity of signatory states. By hosting joint exercises and training sessions, countries are now gaining better understanding of each other's operational procedures and improved interoperability. Kenya is soon going to conduct a coordinated operation with the RCOC and the EUNAVFOR flag ship Durand de la panne. This will be the first of many operations with the RCOC.
3. **The third is Legislative and Judicial Measures:** The DCoC recommends that signatories adopt national legislation to criminalize and penalize piracy and other maritime crimes. A number of countries

including Kenya were able to meet this important requirement for the benefit of the entire region.

**It is also important for signatories to effectively and efficiently utilize the DCoC network for Operations Against Illegal Activities which can be achieved in a number of ways.**

1. By signing the Jeddah Amendment to the Djibouti Code of Conduct, Countries agreed to cooperate to the fullest extent in combating various maritime threats, including piracy, maritime terrorism, IUU (Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated) fishing, trafficking in arms, trafficking in narcotics and psychotropic substances, illegal trade in wildlife and other items (which is in violation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), illegal oil bunkering, crude oil theft, human trafficking, human smuggling, and illegal dumping of toxic waste. Furthermore, the Jeddah Amendment provides for mutual assistance amongst states, including 'sea rider' opportunities.

2. As we work to develop a robust information-sharing network under the auspices of the DCoC, we must also focus on why we will share the information in the first place, which is the need to take action. Therefore, we strongly recommend that the region consider and agree on modalities for cooperation in undertaking operations at sea to deal with maritime crimes.

*For example, if a signatory state receives information from any of the centres or from international partners about illegal activities in its waters, and that country is unable to respond due to operational or logistical challenges, it should be able to request assistance from neighbouring countries or participating international naval forces.*

3. **Dealing with catch and release phenomenon:** International naval forces operating in the region are known to routinely practice "catch and release" because they lack formal arrangement to hand over the suspects for a legal finish. We can use the provisions under the Jeddah Amendment to facilitate such cooperation.

4. There is need for collective action to address the challenge of sea-blindness and the need for enhanced Surveillance and Monitoring. Utilizing shared information through the DCoC ISN, countries can enhance monitoring maritime routes more effectively and detect anomalies faster.

5. An opportunity exists where through collaboration, we can increase Joint Naval Patrols. Countries can initiate joint naval patrols based on the principles of the DCoC, including using sea riders, thereby multiplying the effectiveness of surveillance and interdiction efforts. This cooperative approach also serves as a deterrent to potential criminals. This has been successfully implemented within the MASE collaborating countries.

6. Consideration may also be made on the development of a mechanism that enables optimal sharing of Resources and Facilities: Signatory countries can share resources, such as refuelling stations, port facilities and repair docks, ensuring that naval assets remain operational for longer periods and have shorter turnaround times.

Lastly and in conclusion, I wish to highlight that under the provisions of the Jeddah Amendments, a robust framework for countries in the Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden region to work collectively against maritime threats is clear. By fully utilizing the provisions of the DCoC, signatories can significantly bolster their maritime security capabilities, ensuring safer seas for commerce, navigation, and regional stability. As illicit activities at sea continue to evolve, we carry a critical task of ensuring that the DCoC, through its provisions, stands as a testament to the importance of regional cooperation and shared commitment to maritime security.