

READ AHEAD PAPER

The 8th High-level Meeting on the implementation of the Jeddah Amendment to the Djibouti Code of Conduct, to be held from 12 to 14 November 2025 at the Hilton Mauritius Resort and Spa, Republic of Mauritius (the Mauritius Meeting).

Background

1. In November 2024, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), pursuant to the request of Signatory States to the Djibouti Code of Conduct concerning the repression of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the western Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden (DCoC), the Signatory States to the Jeddah Amendment to the Djibouti Code of Conduct, 2017 (DCoC/JA), and States eligible to sign these instruments (Participants), convened the Seventh High-level Regional Meeting on Implementation of the Jeddah Amendment to the Djibouti Code of Conduct (the Dar es Salaam Meeting), within the context of the Jeddah Amendment. [The Dar es Salaam Meeting](#) was hosted by the United Republic of Tanzania
2. The Dar es Salaam Meeting reviewed progress on implementing the DCoC/JA, addressed new maritime security challenges, and sought common regional solutions. It examined Working Group 1's recommendations on operationalizing the DCoC information-sharing network and coordinating efforts against illegal maritime activities. The meeting further highlighted Working Group 2's capacity-building initiatives, including the creation of [thematic sub-working groups](#), and received a briefing on the outcomes of the [2024 Regional Maritime Security Strategy Workshop](#) held in Jeddah.
3. The Dar Es Salaam Meeting adopted the following resolution:

Resolution One: The approval of the establishment of Working Group 3 (WG3) on operational cooperation and coordination at sea.

This resolution invited signatory states to the DCoC/JA and Friends of the DCoC to nominate suitable personnel from navies, law enforcement agencies and civilian authorities to serve as members of WG3; requested the first meeting of WG3 to elect office bearers and develop suitable terms of reference as well as a work plan; and to invite the Friends of the DCoC to provide the required funding to the DCoC Trust Fund to facilitate the work of WG3.

Thematic priorities for the Mauritius Meeting

Enhancing the Information Sharing Network (ISN)

4. The DCoC/JA Information Sharing Network (ISN) embodies the spirit of collective security, fostering partnerships and knowledge-sharing among countries, organizations, and institutions committed to ensuring safe and secure maritime environments. The strengthening of the ISN depends on interoperable National Maritime Information Sharing Centres (NMISCs) and National Maritime Security

Committees (NMSCs), coherent roadmaps of capability development, and formal linkages with regional fusion and coordination centres. The RMIFC's analytic role of detecting anomalies and flagging Vessels of Interest (VOI) must feed the RCOC's operational tasking loop while the ISN should provide the legal and diplomatic channel for disseminating actionable intelligence to state actors.

5. A regionally governed Vessel of Interest (VOI) database, owned by DCoC states and aligned/connected with RMIFC/RCOC/ISN, will operationally expand MDA. To be effective it must combine AIS/SAT-INT feeds, national declarations, and investigative inputs, governed by a strict access regime and regular quality assurance. Such a VOI database, linked to NMISC roadmaps and donor support, could facilitate greater law enforcement, prosecutions and maritime safety and security across the WIO.

Operational Cooperation and Coordination at Sea (WG3)

6. Operational cooperation and coordination at sea, as articulated by the Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC) Working Group 3 (WG3), can be regarded as a cornerstone of the Western Indian Ocean's evolving maritime security framework. WG3 focuses on fostering practical, interoperable, and sustained collaboration among signatory states to enhance maritime domain awareness (MDA), law enforcement effectiveness, and collective response capabilities. Its agenda translates the DCoC's strategic intent, moving beyond counter-piracy to encompass the wider spectrum of maritime threats, into tangible mechanisms of action and regional trust-building.

7. Regional maritime forces are increasingly building their maritime capacities and capabilities through investments in surveillance systems, patrol vessels, and maritime domain awareness (MDA) technologies. Capacity-building initiatives, such as training exchanges and joint exercises, strengthen operational proficiency and interoperability.

8. WG3 envisions an operational environment in which national maritime agencies function as an integrated network rather than isolated entities. This involves harmonizing procedures for information exchange, joint patrols, and coordinated interdiction at sea. Standardized communication protocols, shared situational awareness tools, and synchronized operational planning are key components of this approach. The establishment and strengthening of National Maritime Information Sharing Centres (NMISCs) feed into the broader Information Sharing Network (ISN), which, through the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC) in Madagascar and the Regional Coordination and Operations Centre (RCOC) in Seychelles, enables timely decision-making, regional cooperation and coordinated responses.

9. WG3 further promotes joint operational exercises which test interoperability and communication between DCoC participants. These activities refine tactics, refine Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and reinforce confidence between regional

partners. Equally vital is the development of common threat assessments and shared intelligence on illicit maritime activities, including smuggling, trafficking, and illegal fishing.

10. By institutionalizing operational cooperation, WG3 contributes to a more predictable and rules-based maritime order in the Western Indian Ocean. It enhances deterrence, improves response times, and supports the creation of a collective maritime security culture. Ultimately, WG3's work underscores that maritime stability in the region depends not on individual state capability, but on the synchronization of effort, shared situational awareness, and coordinated action at sea.

11. International partners such as the EU NAVFOR Atalanta, CMF, IOC, India, INTERPOL and UNODC play a critical role by offering training, intelligence sharing, and technical support. Their engagement provides strategic guidance to align regional initiatives with global maritime security standards. Ultimately, operational cooperation and coordination at sea in the WIO depend on sustained partnerships, shared situational awareness, and joint action. By integrating national capabilities into a coherent regional architecture, the WIO can advance collective maritime governance and ensure the security and prosperity of the region's maritime commons.

Simulation Tabletop Exercises

12. Simulation and tabletop exercises are invaluable tools for enhancing strategic decision-making, operational readiness, and interagency coordination in the maritime and security domains. Their primary advantage lies in creating a risk-free environment where participants can explore complex scenarios, test plans, and evaluate responses to evolving threats without the costs or consequences of real-world operations.

13. Simulation provides a structured method for examining strategic options and understanding the potential outcomes of different courses of action. By simulating adversarial behaviour and uncertainty, it sharpens critical thinking and exposes operational and policy gaps. Similarly, computer-based simulations replicate real-time dynamics, allowing decision-makers to visualize the interplay between capabilities, logistics, and environmental factors in both peacetime and crisis conditions.

14. Tabletop exercises (TTXs) complement these tools by fostering dialogue, coordination, and shared understanding among multiple agencies and partners. They help refine standard operating procedures (SOPs), clarify command relationships, and improve communication across jurisdictions.

15. Collectively, these methodologies support capacity-building and institutional learning by integrating lessons identified into doctrine, training, and operational planning. In the maritime context, they are essential for improving preparedness against piracy, trafficking, or environmental disasters—ultimately strengthening national resilience and regional maritime security cooperation.

Strengthening the Assistance Matrix

16. The DCoC website [Members Only portal](#) was designed as a tool for coordination of capacity building efforts, and to ensure that capacity-building efforts across the Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden are strategic, complementary, and responsive to the real needs of Member States while maximizing the impact of donor investments. This Assistance Matrix (AM) which was previously known as the Capacity Building Matrix (CBM) has the aim of fostering intra-national/inter-agency, inter-regional coordination and cooperation between participating states, regional stakeholders and international naval partners.

17. The Assistance Matrix could be perceived as an information source (central point for information sharing and capacity building coordination), visibility and reach (the website informs maritime role players of the work of the DCoC/JA to enhance maritime security and promote interagency cooperation), technical support (provides functionality for DCoC states to update their capacity building needs and priorities), archive (provide information on work of the DCoC to reduce duplication of effort and promote continuity with partners), monitor and measure project impact and news source (the website's substantiated information reduces the risk of disinformation and misinformation).

18. The need to update the portal was driven by the high use of the website and the requirement to expand the reach to external users, to promote active involvement of member states, ease the event registration process, and technological advancement to make it user friendly and accessible while monitoring regional activities, tracking DCoC HLM recommendations and reporting on their progress.

19. While the EU, through the Safe Seas for Africa program, is proving the funding for the portal, India offered advisory support to the secretariat on implementing enhancements identified at the Dar es Salaam meeting. Such implementation will be executed as follows:

- a. Matrix/website survey.
- b. Standardizing the matrix into information sharing, capability development, capacity building, operational coordination and public messaging.
- c. Establishing protocols for matrix information sharing.
- d. Identifying deconfliction in capacity building activities.
- e. Showcasing needs assessment results.
- f. Include a catalogue of available and required training.
- g. Hold bi-annual force generation donor conferences.

- h. Implement monitoring of activities between partners.

Advancing Thematic Areas of WG2

20. The establishment of the DCoC thematic sub-working groups under WG2 was driven by the need to provide a structured forum for coordinating the multiple capacity-building initiatives being implemented across the region. While these programmes contribute significantly to enhancing maritime security, they have often been delivered in a fragmented and uncoordinated manner. The sub-working groups aim to foster greater coherence, complementarity, and alignment of efforts among donors, implementing partners, and beneficiary States.

IUU Fishing in the Western Indian Ocean

21. Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing constitutes one of the most persistent and destabilizing maritime challenges in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO). The region's extensive Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), limited maritime enforcement capacity, and porous governance structures create conditions conducive to illicit exploitation of marine resources. IUU fishing undermines national economies, depletes fish stocks, and erodes the sustainability of coastal livelihoods, posing both economic and security risks.

22. The WIO hosts valuable tuna and small pelagic fisheries that attract distant-water fleets, some of which operate in violation of regional and international regulations. Weak monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS) frameworks—combined with inadequate vessel tracking, limited prosecution capacity, and flag-state non-compliance—allow offenders to evade detection and accountability. This not only distorts local markets but also fuels associated crimes, including document fraud, smuggling, and labour exploitation.

23. Regional mechanisms such as the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), the Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC), and the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) promote cooperative governance through shared data, capacity-building, and joint enforcement operations. Strengthening maritime domain awareness (MDA), harmonizing vessel licensing systems, and developing a regional Vessels-of-Interest (VOI) database are critical measures. Sustained political commitment and inter-agency coordination remain essential to combat IUU fishing and ensure long-term maritime resource security in the WIO.

Marine Environmental Protection in the Western Indian Ocean

24. Marine environmental protection in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) is an increasingly critical dimension of regional maritime governance. The WIO supports some of the world's most biodiverse marine ecosystems, yet these are under escalating pressure from pollution, overfishing, coastal development, and the impacts of climate change. Degraded coral reefs, declining fish stocks, and marine litter—

particularly plastics—threaten both ecological resilience and the socio-economic wellbeing of coastal communities.

25. The MV *Wakashio* oil spill (ran aground on a coral reef in Mauritius on 25 July 2020) and *MT Sounion* (attacked by the Houthis in 2024) incidents underscored critical lessons for marine environmental protection in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO). Both highlighted the region's limited spill-response capacity, inadequate contingency planning, and the need for rapid regional coordination mechanisms. They demonstrated the importance of strengthened monitoring, control, and surveillance systems, improved coastal preparedness, and effective interagency and international collaboration. The incidents emphasized the necessity of harmonized legal frameworks, shared resources, and regular joint training to enhance resilience. Ultimately, they reinforced that proactive prevention, timely response, and sustained regional cooperation are essential for safeguarding the WIO's fragile marine ecosystems.

26. Regional frameworks such as the Nairobi Convention (UNEP) provide the institutional foundation for collective environmental stewardship. The Convention promotes cooperation among coastal and island states in addressing land- and sea-based sources of pollution, habitat degradation, and marine biodiversity loss. Complementary initiatives, including the (WIOMSA) and the (IOC), enhance scientific research, policy harmonization, and capacity-building.

27. Effective marine environmental protection requires integrated ocean governance that aligns national development priorities with conservation imperatives. Strengthening marine spatial planning, enforcing environmental impact assessments, and investing in blue economy models that emphasize sustainability are vital steps. Collaborative monitoring, regional contingency planning, and adaptive management approaches are essential to safeguarding the WIO's marine environment as a shared natural and economic heritage for future generations.

WG3 Way Forward

28. The inaugural workshop on the establishment of [DCOC WG3](#) took place in Mombasa, Kenya from 1 to 4 September 2025. This meeting formally established WG3, elected Kenya as Chair and Djibouti as Deputy Chair and developed three foundational documents:

- a. **Concept of Operations.** The purpose of WG3 would be to “enhance maritime security in the WIO and GoA” while the objectives include enhancing maritime domain awareness, building national and regional capacities, coordinating operational responses, and ensuring an effective legal finish. [The Concept of Operations](#) should contain performance metrics which could include response times, training outcomes and mission success rates while the documents should also

outline the management of resources (personnel, equipment, finances and international partner support). The concept of operations covers the operational environment for the following:

- i. Enhanced MDA.
 - ii. Building national and regional capabilities and capacities.
 - iii. Coordinate operational responses.
 - iv. Develop means to enhance effective legal finish between participating signatory states.
- b. **Terms of Reference.** The draft [Terms of Reference](#) were discussed and refined while it was agreed that these terms could be approved by the Steering Committee. The meeting agreed that the protection of the marine environment and emerging threat of cyber maritime security should be included in the document while a clear distinction should be made of the explicit responsibilities of the different working groups to avoid duplication of effort.
- c. **Comprehensive five-phase roadmap.** The structured [roadmap](#) for the establishment and operationalization of Working Group 3 was adopted to transform high level goals into concrete actions.
- i. **Phase 0:** Establishment (0-2 months).
 - ii. **Phase 1:** Framework Development (2-12 months).
 - iii. **Phase 2:** Capacity Building and Pilot Operations (12-24 months).
 - iv. **Phase 3:** Full Operationalization (24-36 months).
 - v. **Phase 4:** Consolidation and Sustainability (36+ months).
- d. **Scope of Operations.** The operations of WG3 will include:
- i. Safety and security of vessels contribution to freedom of navigation.
 - ii. Surveillance and monitoring.
 - iii. Joint response operations.
 - iv. Regional and interregional cooperation in compliance to international law.
 - v. Capacity building and capacity development.
 - vi. Joint exercises.

vii. New and emerging threat security.

29. The meeting emphasised the deliberate need to have a whole of government approach, legal finish for successful prosecutions and highlighted the force multiplication role of international partners. The Friends of the DCoC are considered vital for supporting operations, sharing best practices and mobilizing resources.

30. The foundational documents were submitted to the Steering Committee for adoption and are to be endorsed at the 8th DCoC High Level Meeting in November 2025.

DCoC Engagement Strategy

31. [The Engagement Strategy](#) is an actionable document that integrates national priorities with regional cooperation mechanisms, ensures effective donor coordination, and enhances the legal and operational frameworks for maritime security. It builds on the strengths and opportunities and addresses the weaknesses and threats experienced by DCoC signatory States and their investment partners. It is designed to serve as both a high-level policy narrative and a practical implementation tool, aligning with the draft Regional Maritime Security Strategy (RMSS). It offers an action plan with key performance indicators and proposes next steps.

32. The Engagement Strategy represents a coherent framework for DCoC States, partners, and donors to collectively secure the maritime domain. By moving from fragmented initiatives to coordinated implementation, it provides a path to durable regional ownership, enhanced resilience, and lawful, sustainable use of the seas. The aim of the Strategy is to secure the maritime domain of the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Western Indian Ocean by building resilient national and regional institutions, repressing transnational organized crime in the maritime domain, maritime terrorism, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and other illegal activities at sea, and ensuring lawful, sustainable use of the seas. Its success will depend on sustained political commitment, effective donor alignment, and the integration of inclusivity and resilience at every stage. The Strategy is phased as follows:

- a. Short term (0–12 months): Formalize WG3 structures, adopt SOPs, establish NMISC project leads, and secure donor pledges.
- b. Medium term (12–36 months): Conduct joint training and operations, operationalize NMISCs in Kenya and Tanzania, and harmonize national legislation.
- c. Long term (36+ months): Institutionalize WG3 into national systems, achieve full NMISC operational capacity, operationalize the Trust Fund, and expand partnerships with AU, CMF, IORA, and industry actors.

33. The draft Engagement Strategy sets out seven mutually reinforcing priorities that align with the draft Regional Maritime Security Strategy (RMSS):

- a. Governance – Establish and strengthen National Maritime Security Committees and integrate National Maritime Security Risk Registers
- b. Operational Cooperation – Deliver the WG3 roadmap, standard operating procedures, and regular joint operations.
- c. Legal Harmonization – Align national legislation with international frameworks and establish a Regional Legal Forum to ensure prosecutions and avoid “catch and release.”
- d. Donor Coordination – Institutionalize annual donor roundtables, operationalize the DCoC Trust Fund, and align pledges with the Capacity Building Matrix.
- e. Industry Engagement – Launch a Public–Private Maritime Security Forum to systematize industry reporting, cyber resilience, and crisis response.
- f. Resilience – Develop frameworks for cyber defence, humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HA/DR), and critical infrastructure protection.
- g. Gender and Inclusion – Mainstream gender and youth participation across all structures, targeting 30% representation by 2028.
