

Eighth High-Level Meeting on Implementation of the Jeddah Amendment to the Djibouti Code of Conduct

Held in the Republic of Mauritius

at the Hilton Resort and Spa

12 – 14 November 2025

Summary of Decisions WG3

Enhancing Operational Coordination at Sea (WG3 Focus)

Session 3, led by discussions from the newly established Working Group 3 (WG3), shifted the focus from information sharing to **tangible operational coordination at sea, interagency integration, and legal execution** (known as the "Legal Finish"). The discussions, driven by regional navies, emphasized the transition from strategic cooperation to sustainable, unified action in maritime operations.

Key Operational Challenges and National Responses

Presentations from Kenya, Djibouti, and South Africa highlighted the need for a **"whole-of-government perspective"** at the national level to translate interdictions at sea into successful prosecutions ashore.

Nation	Key Challenge	Proposed Solution / Success
Kenya	Legal Finish and Data Sensitivity: Found that having evidence/criminals did not guarantee a successful case (lack of "case support") ¹ . Faced issues sharing sensitive data due to national sovereignty concerns ² .	Adopted a whole-of-government approach integrating Navy, prosecution, and law enforcement <i>before</i> operations ³ . Highlighted success in a recent anti-narcotics operation coordinated with Seychelles ⁴ .
Djibouti	Resource Constraints and Piracy: Noted the risk of piracy returning if international forces leave and faced challenges like illicit trafficking and illegal fishing ⁵ .	Focused on modernizing capabilities, strengthening the legal framework , and deepening national/regional/international cooperation ⁶ . Emphasized success in search and rescue and working with forces like EU NAVFOR-ATALANTA ⁷ .
South Africa (RSA)	Fragmented Coordination and Sustainability: Faced institutional silos, inconsistent funding for naval deployments (e.g., Operation PAPISA), and competition for operational authority ⁸ .	Implements a long-standing whole-of-government approach and integrated security outcome via mechanisms like Operation Copper (with Mozambique) to build trust and ensure coherent policy across sectors ⁹ .

The Critical Issue of Legal Finish

A major consensus emerged around the necessity of addressing the **Legal Finish**. Interdicting criminals at sea is insufficient if the evidence cannot be successfully prosecuted in court.

- **Standardized Procedures:** The need to draft and adopt **standardized procedures** for arrest, evidence collection, and prosecution across all DCoC signatory states was emphasized¹⁰.
- **Specialized Teams:** Discussions called for establishing a regional framework for pooling **specialized teams**, including **forensic experts** and **translators/legal experts**, to ensure the timely transfer of evidentiary material from maritime arrests to international partners and courts¹¹.

Enhancing Regional Coordination (RCOC/RMIFC)

The **Regional Maritime Security Architecture (RMSE)**, comprising the **Regional Maritime Information and Fusion Centre (RMIFC)** and the **Regional Coordination Operations Centre (RCOC)**, provided an overview of its operational framework.

- **Framework & Assets:** The RMSE, based on the 2018 Regional Agreement, covers a zone of operation spanning **28 million square kilometers** and leverages pooled assets, including **37 naval vessels and 6 maritime aircraft** pledged by member states¹².
- **Coordination Success:** The RCOC has coordinated **45 operations** since late 2021, proving that a common approach can effectively disrupt illicit activities, as demonstrated by the **anti-narcotics operation** coordinated between Seychelles and Kenya¹³.
- **Complementarity:** RCOC/RMIFC stressed the need for mechanisms like WG3 to work **complementarily** with existing architectures like RMSE, ensuring all operations conform to national and international legal frameworks¹⁴.

Key Recommendations for the Way Forward

- **Adopt Whole-of-Government:** Incorporate the **Whole-of-Government approach** model in all DCoC maritime activities and ensure funding for national capacity-building¹⁵.
- **Legal & Logistical Frameworks:** Secure **political and legal frameworks** (e.g., bilateral agreements) for joint operations and develop shared logistics and asset rotation plans to achieve sustainable cooperation¹⁶.
- **Joint Training:** Conduct **shared training cycles** and realistic joint exercises that encompass **operational, forensic, and legal components**¹⁷.
- **Roster of Experts:** Create a **roster/pool of forensic and legal experts** to deploy with operations and support prosecutions.

Summary

Session 3, focused on the work of the new Working Group 3 (WG3), addressed the crucial shift from information sharing to tangible, coordinated operational action at sea, with a strong emphasis on achieving the Legal Finish (successful prosecution).

Key takeaways included:

Whole-of-Government Approach: The need for national members (like Kenya, Djibouti, and South Africa) to adopt a Whole-of-Government approach model, integrating navy, law enforcement, and prosecution authorities before operations begin, was universally stressed.

Legal Finish as Priority: The biggest challenge is ensuring that arrests at sea lead to prosecution ashore. The meeting emphasized the urgent need to draft and adopt standardized procedures for evidence collection and prosecution across DCoC states.



Regional Pooling of Experts: To support legal finish, the session called for creating a regional framework and roster/pool of specialized experts, including translators and forensic/legal experts, to deploy with operations.

Operational Framework: The Regional Maritime Security Architecture (RMSE), comprising the RCOC and RMIFC, demonstrated its effectiveness, noting it has coordinated 45 operations since late 2021, proving that common action can disrupt illicit activities.

The consensus was that success is defined not just by arrests, but by the certainty of the legal process that follows.
