

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

Day Two Recap

DAY TWO SESSION 1

DCoC Engagement Strategy & Assistance Matrix

Day Two began with a strong emphasis on a structured, sustainable action plan, primarily through the launch of the DCoC Engagement Strategy and the critical upgrade of our primary support tool, the Assistance Matrix.

The Republic of Mauritius as Chair of the 8th HLM Meeting reiterated the need to ensure that there is a need for participants to ensure continued focus on the Agenda of the meeting reiterating that the collective goal of the DCoC/JA was to enhance cooperation, improve maritime security, and make the seas safer for maritime traffic, regional economies and global trade. She highlighted the need to ensure a focus on the practical implementation of the Jeddah Amendments through identification of practical actions that would:

- Ensure implementation of commitments made
- Support structures created
- Ensuring that decisions taken at the 8th High-Level Meeting translate into concrete steps at national and regional levels.

She encouraged participants to engage constructively, avoid repetition, and keep interventions aligned with the purpose of the DCoC/JA to build a stronger, more coordinated, and more effective regional maritime security architecture.

The discussion for Day 2 followed the following format:

1. Presentation, validation and adoption of the DCoC/JA Engagement Strategy

The Secretariat presented the DCoC Regional Engagement Strategy (2025–2030), a comprehensive document aimed at moving the DCoC from a policy platform to a fully operational security mechanism. Key highlights of the Strategy were as follows:

- **Overall Goal:** To secure the maritime domain of the WIO/GoA by building resilient national and regional institutions and ensuring local sustainable use of the sea.
- **Action Pillars:** The strategy proposes action across seven key areas, including Governance, Operational Cooperation, Legal Harmonization, Donor Coordination, and Industry Engagement.
- **Core Principles:** It reasserts State Sovereignty and Regional Ownership while embedding Inclusivity (targeting 30% women participation by 2028) and Investment and Support.
- **Key Commitments:** The Secretariat sought adoption of the strategy and approval for:

- Establishing and strengthening National Maritime Security Committees (NMSCs) and related strategies.
- Institutionalizing annual donor roundtables and operationalizing the DCoC Trust Fund.
- Launching a Public-Private Maritime Security Forum to structure engagement with the shipping industry.

Way Forward: The strategy remains a "living document" and would be finalized over the next few weeks following input from all stakeholders.

2. Strengthening the Assistance Matrix

The session detailed the critical upgrade from the former "Capacity Building Matrix" to the new "DCoC Assistance Matrix", now viewed as a comprehensive tool to align partner support with verified national needs.

- **Justification:** The matrix needs to be upgraded due to technological obsolescence, the need to handle quantitative data (moving away from narrative reports), and the need to show impact and measure return on investment.
- **Key Enhancements:** The new matrix would feature a standardized data structure (including Category and Sub-Category specifications), enabling powerful data analysis tools (like Power BI). It will also include enhanced security (two-factor authentication), streamline event registration, and feature real-time monitoring tools to track progress against support given.
- **Implementation:** The upgrade process is set to follow a tight timeline: 60 days for development, followed by a 30-day stakeholder review and assessment period.
- **User Focus:** Member States were urged to provide practical, experience-based feedback now to guide the final development, ensuring the tool aligns with the strategic "logical journey" of the DCoC.

3. Advancing Thematic Areas: IUU Fishing, Port and Ship Security and Marine Environmental Protection

IUU Fishing and Marine Environmental Protection Summary

The Session focused on accelerating progress on key thematic areas under the Jeddah Amendment, specifically combating Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, enhancing port and ship security, and strengthening marine environmental protection. The discussions heavily emphasized the need for a unified, intelligence-led, cross-sectoral approach. The following were key discussions:

.1 Combating IUU Fishing: Corruption and Enforcement

The central message regarding IUU fishing was the necessity of addressing the root cause: corruption. IUU fishing is a major global and regional threat, accounting for over 20% of annual catches (with an estimated value of over USD 23 billion annually).

- **Legal Clarity:** Effective prosecution requires distinguishing clearly between illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. All cases must be evidence-based, with states urged to ensure their national laws include deterrent legal penalties and adhere to Article 73 of UNCLOS.
- **Enforcement Synergy:** Tanzania presented its experience with the National Joint Operations Center (NJOC), a successful "whole-of-government" model that unifies command and coordination structures to break down agency silos.

- **Intelligence Role:** INTERPOL highlighted that IUU fishing is the "tip of the iceberg," enabled by crimes like document fraud, tax evasion, and modern slavery. INTERPOL works globally with national central bureaus to provide intelligence-led enforcement, criminal analysis support, and live mentoring for evidence collection during inspections. They provided examples of successful seizures of nearly six tons of cocaine found on fishing vessels.
- **EU Support:** The EU is launching the New Sustainable Western Indian Ocean Programme, which includes expert support from the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA). EFCA will provide risk assessment, facilitate the exchange of inspectors, and use satellite imagery to focus joint patrols against IUU.

.2 Marine Environmental Protection & Port Security

Discussions on marine environmental threats and port security stressed collective regional preparedness and a unified approach.

- **Pollution Preparedness (MARPOL):** The IOC highlighted the region's high maritime traffic (over 200,000 vessels annually) and the global threat of marine pollution. They emphasized the lesson learned from past incidents (like the *Wakashio* incident) that preparedness cannot be handled by one country alone. The IOC called for establishing a regional coordination center and national oil pollution funds.
- **Integrated Inspections (MARPOL/ISPS):** Mauritius detailed the operational challenge of simultaneously enforcing the MARPOL (marine environment) and ISPS (ship/port security) codes, noting conflicts in budgetary needs, specialized training, and operational flow. The proposed solution is a single, unified approach that leverages shared resources and information to protect the marine and physical infrastructure without "paralyzing trade".
- **Cyber Resilience:** The challenge of cyber security was noted, as modern ports rely heavily on automated systems vulnerable to cyber-attacks.

.3 Key Decisions and Operational Next Steps

The session concluded with several concrete actions aimed at legal harmonization and institutional scaling:

- **Legal Toolkit:** Develop a regional legal toolkit and model laws for IUU fishing and environmental crimes to enable cross-border enforcement and harmonized penalties.
- **Institutional Scaling:** Replicate the successful National Joint Operations Center (NJOC) model into regional joint patrols and shared command structures.
- **Contingency Planning:** Establish a regional coordination centre and a comprehensive regional contingency plan for oil pollution, integrating these regional plans with national ones.
- **Training and Intelligence:** Partners are to roll out training activities, including inspector exchanges, and provide satellite/radar imagery and maritime intelligence to support national Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) efforts.

SUMMARY

Session 2 focused on advancing thematic areas, particularly combating IUU fishing and marine environmental protection.

- **IUU Root Cause:** The session stressed that the core challenge in fighting IUU fishing is corruption, and that effective enforcement requires evidence-based cases and clear legal distinction between illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.

- **Whole-of-Government Model:** Tanzania presented its successful National Joint Operations Center (NJOC), a "whole-of-government" approach that integrates multiple agencies to improve efficiency and reduce duplication.
- **Legal Harmonization:** The consensus was the urgent need to develop a regional legal toolkit and model laws for IUU and environmental crimes to enable cross-border enforcement.
- **Pollution Preparedness:** The **IOC** emphasized that pollution preparedness (MARPOL) cannot be handled by one country alone. There is a need to establish a regional coordination centre and comprehensive contingency plan for oil pollution.
- **Unified Security/Safety:** **Mauritius** called for a **single, unified approach** to implementing both the MARPOL (safety) and ISPS (security) codes to avoid conflicting priorities and paralyzing trade.
- **Intelligence Support:** INTERPOL highlighted its role in providing intelligence-led enforcement and specialized support for evidence collection against vessels involved in the fisheries crime supply chain.

4. Regional interventions contributing to strengthening maritime security in the region

Private Sector Capabilities and Collaboration

The section introduced the crucial role of the private sector in maritime security and emphasized the need to move existing policy frameworks into immediate, practical action at sea.

Ambrey Global Response Limited, a global risk management organization, highlighted its mission to enhance safety and security through collaboration, stressing that the maritime domain is too vast for governments to manage alone.

- **Risk Management & Operations:** Ambrey detailed its 15-year evolution from focusing on piracy to providing complex risk analytics and advisory services influenced by national intelligence. They leverage unique insights from owning and operating vessels and maintain a Global Operations Centre that is connected to over 15,000 commercial vessels for monitoring and situational understanding.
- **Operational Support:** They showcased capabilities in rapid response operations, including salvage, medical evacuation, and search and rescue. This capability is critical, as demonstrated by their involvement in the *Sounion* tanker incident, which required firefighting in a war zone to avert a catastrophic environmental and humanitarian disaster affecting millions.
- **Partnership Mandate:** Ambrey stressed that collaboration is not just a requirement but a necessity. They proposed private sector involvement as a force multiplier to provide support where states have budgetary constraints or limited assets.

Call for Actionable Solutions (Next Steps)

The session concluded by strongly commending the DCoC space for its proactive focus on changing "policy to practice", recognizing that incidents at sea require immediate, non-bureaucratic responses.

Parallel Sessions: The session concluded by immediately moving the agenda into two parallel sessions (NFP and Working Group 3).

Parallel meetings

1. WORKING GROUP 3

Strategic Communication Brief: Why WG3 Matters to Industry

Working Group 3 (WG3) plays a critical role in protecting trade and maritime assets across the region. Its strategic relevance to industry lies in three key areas: reducing operational and reputational risk, mitigating insurance and compliance costs, and ensuring a legally sound conclusion to maritime incidents. By aligning with WG3, industry stakeholders can build trust and reinforce their commitment to secure, resilient maritime operations.

Current Threat Landscape and WG3's Response

The maritime threat environment is evolving, with transnational organized crime (TOC) increasingly exploiting jurisdictional gaps and operational blind spots. WG3 is mandated to address these shifts by enhancing coordination, legal clarity, and operational readiness. Its response includes developing protocols, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and mechanisms for joint operations that reflect the realities of regional capabilities and stakeholder needs.

Call to Action: What Industry needs to do

To enable WG3's success, industry engagement is essential. Three immediate actions are required:

1. Timely Reporting of incidents and suspicious activities to national and regional centres.
2. Data Sharing to support threat analysis, operational planning, and legal follow-through.
3. Commitment to Best Practices that align with regional SOPs and support coordinated responses.

These inputs are vital to building shared awareness and ensuring WG3 can deliver actionable outcomes.

Engagement and Contact

WG3 is the operational partner in maritime security. Stakeholders are encouraged to engage directly, provide feedback, and participate in shaping protocols and joint response mechanisms. Contact details and engagement channels will be made accessible via the DCOC portal.

Floor Reactions and Operational Considerations

Discussions emphasized the need to prioritize SOP development—not as a reinvention, but as an upscale of existing frameworks to include partnering states. Concerns were raised about delays in WG1 and WG2 affecting WG3's rollout, and some proposals were flagged for further internal review. There was consensus on the importance of aligning SOPs with actual capabilities and clarifying triggers for joint operations. Participants also stressed the difference between possessing information and acting on it—underscoring the need for operational follow-through.

2. NFP Parallel Session

Strategic Direction & Information Platform Debate Summary

The National Focal Point (NFP) Parallel Session was highly focused on ensuring stability in DCoC leadership and resolving the complex debate over the future of the regional information-sharing platform. The NFPs, as the operational backbone, demanded actionable guidance on implementation.

1. Information Sharing Platform Debate

The session intensely debated how to resolve the proliferation of maritime security platforms and achieve interoperability (a problem highlighted throughout Day One).

- **Decentralized Approach Preference:** Member States deliberated on a decentralized approach that respects the sovereignty and technical choices of member states.
- **Key Action (Interim Approach):** The consensus leaned towards an interim approach focused on interoperability: allowing member states to continue using their chosen platforms while creating a DCoC membership community area within existing systems to enable coordination without forcing a unified platform.
- **Assessment Mandate:** There was a call to conduct an assessment/study of information-sharing platform options to determine the feasibility of integrating existing systems and to address financial/technical challenges before committing to a final, long-term solution.
- **Interoperability Mandate:** The group strongly emphasized the need for national centres to be **interoperable** and work towards standardized centres.
- **Restructuring Information:** Commitment was made to enhancing the operational matrix/presentation and continuing the work on the **Vessels of Interest (VOI) database**.

2. DCoC Governance and Next Steps

NFPs agreed to significant changes regarding how the DCoC meetings and governance should be structured moving forward:

- **Meeting Format Reform:** There was strong agreement to move away from the current format towards "traditional meetings" (similar to IMO committees), where member states submit formal documents (recommendations, action papers, and information documents) in advance. This ensures focused discussion and allows the Secretariat time to prepare the final resolutions.
- **Pre-Meeting Proposal:** It was suggested to hold an informal NFP meeting immediately preceding the formal high-level conference to discuss outcomes and implementation details before public statements are made.
- **Mandate for Working Groups:** The working groups (WG1, WG3) were tasked with developing practical solutions and specific timelines for the actionable items, reinforcing the theme of moving from "policy to practice".

Steering Committee elections: It was agreed to maintain current Steering Committee and Working Group Leadership for continuity of progressing work.

3. Strategy and Document Formalization

- **Engagement Strategy:** The NFPs agreed that the DCoC Engagement Strategy to be circulated to Stakeholders and feedback to be received within 3 to 4 weeks

Closing Remarks

The Principal Secretary of Mauritius concluded Day 2 by expressing appreciation to all delegates for their valuable insights and contributions throughout the day. He further acknowledged the substantial support provided by India, emphasizing that such engagement merits consideration of India not merely as an Observer or Friend of the DCoC, but as a full Member. Accordingly, he formally requested the Signatory States to deliberate on Mauritius's proposal to elevate India's status within the DCoC framework.
