



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

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Keynote Address by Jose Matheickal, Director, Technical Cooperation and Implementation Division, International Maritime Organization (IMO)

Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, friends of the Djibouti Code of Conduct, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is a privilege to address you on behalf of the International Maritime Organization at this Eighth High-Level Meeting of the Signatories to the Djibouti Code of Conduct and its Jeddah Amendment.

Let me begin by expressing our heartfelt appreciation to the Government of Mauritius for hosting us in this beautiful island nation - a place that reminds us why we do what we do. Here, surrounded by the boundless Indian Ocean, we are reminded that these waters unite our peoples, sustain our economies, and safeguard our collective future.

1. From Promise to Proof - A Call for Tangible Results

The Djibouti Code of Conduct has come a long way since its inception. It began as a bold response to large-scale piracy attacks in the region - which peaked around 2011, and through the Jeddah Amendment, it evolved into a comprehensive framework addressing every major maritime threat - from piracy and armed robbery and trafficking to illegal fishing and environmental crimes.

But today, let me be direct: our region does not need more frameworks - it needs results.

Too often our communiqués celebrate structures, strategies, and declarations. Yet, what matters most is what happens *after* we leave this room. The metric of our success must be fewer attacks, fewer victims, fewer illicit incidents - and more secure livelihoods for our coastal communities.

We have been reminded this year that piracy has not disappeared. Three piracy-related boarding or hijacking incidents in the region since January 2025 - the latest attempt on 3 November - tell us that the risk, while diminished compared to historic peaks, persists.

Vigilance and preparedness for all maritime security threats is a necessity.

The Jeddah Amendment's Article 3 calls for national strategies and mechanisms. Many have started; some are thriving. But real change will only happen when these frameworks are operational - when information shared today saves a vessel tomorrow; when cooperation



across borders prevents trafficking next week; when coordinated patrols make piracy unviable next year.

This High-Level Meeting, I believe, is the moment to shift gear - from dialogue to delivery, from intention to impact.

2. The Power of Collective Commitment

Our collective progress proves one truth: no nation can secure its seas alone, but together we can secure a region.

We have seen what partnership can achieve. Working Groups on information sharing, capacity-building coordination, and operational cooperation at sea are no longer ideas on paper - they are living, working platforms of trust. The “Friends of the DCoC” forum has created a bridge between the region and our international partners. But bridges must lead to destinations.

So, I call upon all Signatory States - let this be the meeting where we make measurable commitments:

- To share information in real time, not after incidents happen.
- To exercise our joint coordination centres not as symbolic structures, but as operational hubs.
- To treat maritime domain awareness data as a regional public good.
- And to ensure that every training, every patrol, every workshop is tied to outcomes - to fewer crimes at sea.

To our industry partners here today, I say: help us define what success looks like. Tell us what the shipping community expects from the Djibouti Code of Conduct in practical terms - safer routes, reduced premiums, faster incident response? Your expectations should guide our performance indicators. This dialogue between governments, IMO, and industry must evolve - from consultation to co-design.

3. IMO's Renewed Commitment - A Thematic Focus on Security

Allow me to share that IMO, too, has undergone its own transformation recently, under the visionary leadership of its Secretary General, Mr. Arsenio Dominguez.

Recognizing the complexity and urgency of maritime security challenges, we have established a stand-alone Thematic Programme on Maritime Security under our Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme.

This means that maritime security is no longer an “add-on” to IMO’s work - it is a core global priority for technical cooperation, on par with decarbonization, safety, and gender empowerment.

Through this new structure, we are streamlining all IMO security projects under two coherent regional pillars:

- The Djibouti Code of Conduct and Jeddah Amendment for the Western Indian Ocean and Red Sea, and
- The Yaoundé Code of Conduct for the Gulf of Guinea.

These two regional frameworks will now serve as the anchors for all of IMO's maritime security cooperation, ensuring coherence, synergy, and stronger communication with every stakeholder.

No more scattered projects, no more parallel messages - one integrated programme, one clear line of accountability.

This restructuring allows us to align every donor contribution, every activity, every training, under these regional mechanisms. It brings greater efficiency, transparency, and above all - impact.

4. Streamlining Partnerships - Building a Security Ecosystem

I also want to acknowledge our implementing partners and donors - especially the European Union, whose sustained support through the *Safe Seas for Africa Project* continues to strengthen our shared maritime governance. Your contributions have been transformative.

Yet we must go further. The challenges we face - illegal fishing, smuggling, trafficking, and cyber threats - are morphing faster than our bureaucracies. To keep pace, our cooperation must become more agile, our funding more flexible, and our coordination more disciplined.

The new DCoC Assistance Matrix gives us the tool to avoid duplication, identify synergies, and focus investments where they matter most. But a tool is only as powerful as the hand that wields it. It is now time to use it rigorously - to ensure that every dollar, every training day, every partnership delivers measurable security dividends.

5. Ownership, Trust, and Measurable Impact

At its heart, the Djibouti Code of Conduct is not a project - it is a promise. A promise that countries of this region made to one another - that their cooperation will protect the lifeblood of their economies and the livelihoods of their people.

IMO stands shoulder to shoulder with every signatory in fulfilling that promise. But ownership must remain in the region. Our role is to enable, to convene, to support - not to replace regional leadership. The future of this architecture depends on your active commitment: national strategies that are resourced, information shared without hesitation, and operations coordinated without delay.

Let us measure success not by the number of meetings we hold, or training workshops we organise, but by how many lives are made safer, how many illicit operations are prevented, and how many seafarers transit these waters without fear.

6. A Shared Horizon - What the Future Demands

The sea connects us, but it also tests us.

We used to say, "Control of the sea by maritime commerce and naval power is the key to national greatness."

But in today's world, control is not dominance - it is cooperation.

We are witnessing a new convergence: piracy, trafficking, illegal fishing, and environmental degradation no longer exist in silos. They feed off one another. The response must therefore be whole-of-region, whole-of-system, and whole-of-society.

This is why the DCoC must become the *platform of platforms* - linking maritime domain awareness, law enforcement, environmental protection, and economic development. Because security is not only about stopping threats - it is about creating confidence to trade, invest, and thrive.

7. A Message to Partners and Donors

To our international partners and friends - the EU, Denmark, Japan, the United States, and many others - we value your unwavering support. But today, I invite you to look beyond projects and towards programmatic sustainability.

Align your support through the Djibouti Code of Conduct. Use it as your single gateway for regional maritime security cooperation. It is the mechanism endorsed by Member States; it is where regional ownership lives; and it is where collective impact can be measured.

8. Conclusion - From Waves of Words to Currents of Action

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Indian Ocean is vast, but its destiny will be defined by the unity of those who share it.

We cannot afford complacency, nor can we accept partial progress.

Our dialogue must now produce *currents of action* strong enough to carry us towards tangible peace and prosperity.

Let this High-Level Meeting in Mauritius be remembered as the moment we turned *the tide* -

- from coordination to cooperation,
- from policy to practice,
- and from promises to performance.

IMO stands ready - not only as a partner, but as an enabler of change. With our new thematic structure and unified regional portfolios, we are ready to help turn your commitments into capacity, and your capacity into results.

Together, let us ensure that the next time we meet, we are not counting reports or trainees - but counting fewer attacks, fewer losses, and more success stories.

Let this be the meeting where the region tells the world: *Our seas are secure, our cooperation is strong, and our commitment is real.*

Because when nations work together, the ocean - our shared ocean - can once again become what it was always meant to be: a sea of opportunity, not of threat.

Thank you.