



DCoC/JA NFPs Extraordinary Meeting No 4

Virtual via Teams

Wednesday 28 August 2024

Record of the Meeting

1. The Signatory States of the Djibouti Code of Conduct and the Jeddah Amendment (hereinafter referred to as the DCoC/JA) and states eligible to sign these instruments (hereinafter referred to collectively as 'Participants'), through their National Focal Points (NFPs) and invited international partners, met to discuss a coordinated approach to mitigating the environmental threat in the Red Sea area. The meeting was held virtually via TEAMS on Wednesday, 28 August 2024.

2. The meeting was attended by participants from the following Signatory States:

BAHRAIN	COMOROS	ETHIOPIA	JORDAN
KENYA	MOZAMBIQUE	SOMALIA	SOUTH AFRICA
TANZANIA	YEMEN		

And representatives from: **AMBREY, AUXILIUM WORLDWIDE, CRIMARIO, COMBINED MARITIME FORCES (CMF), EU NAVFOR ASPIDES, EU NAVFOR ATALANTA, IMO, MARISKS, UNITED STATES NAVAL FORCES CENTRAL COMMAND (NAVCENT), REGIONAL MARITIME INFORMATION SHARING CENTRE (RMIFC), and REGIONAL COORDINATION OPERATION CENTRE (RCOC).**

The full list of participants is attached as **Annex A**.

Aim

3. The aim of the meeting was to deliberate on the impending environmental crisis following the Houthi rebel attacks on the MV Sounion in the Red Sea and to explore how the DCoC can adopt a coordinated approach to mitigate the effects of the potential oil spill. The agenda is attached as **Annex B**

Executive Summary

4. The meeting focused on the environmental threat posed by a potential oil spill from the MV Sounion in the Red Sea, which is carrying 150,000 tons of crude oil. The tanker, currently on fire and afloat, poses a significant risk to the marine ecosystem and coastal communities. Discussions highlighted the need for international cooperation, emergency response strategies, and the availability of necessary equipment. The potential impact includes severe ecological damage, serious economic repercussions, and humanitarian crises, particularly affecting the 35 million people reliant on desalination plants. The meeting emphasized the

urgency of preventing a catastrophic spill and the critical importance of regional and international collaboration.

**Welcome Remarks from the Chair-DCoC
Metse Ralephenya- RSA**

5. The Chairman welcomed all participants and thanked them for their commitment in making themselves available on short notice. He noted that the DCoC has been resolute in calling for concerted efforts to protect the safety and security of shipping in the Western Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden, including the Red Sea area, and will continue to do so.

6. He reiterated the need for the international community to work closely with regional states and thanked the international naval partners for stepping up their efforts. The Chair noted that the actions the DCoC has been advocating for are consistent with the spirit and provisions of the DCoC/JA, and the DCoC remains committed to providing regional solutions to regional challenges in every way it can.

7. Given the nature of these attacks, the DCoC has been warning of the potential risk of an ecological disaster. The current issue involves the Greek-flagged MV Sounion, which is in danger of spilling more than 150,000 tonnes—or one million barrels—of crude oil, potentially resulting in the largest oil spill in recorded history. He noted that this should serve as a wake-up call for the region. He warned that this may not be the end of such attacks and that the risk could shift to the wider Western Indian Ocean, as Houthi rebels may seek out targets farther afield.

8. The Chairman noted that the purpose of the meeting was, therefore, to reinforce the need for the region to work together in addressing our common challenges, adding that international partners had been invited to share their perspectives because this is not just a regional problem but requires the concerted efforts of all.

The talking points are attached as Annex C

**Capt. Sam Gontier- Director, RCOC
Status of the MV Sounion**

9. Capt. Sam Gontier provided a status update on the MV Sounion, detailing the potential risks and challenges it presents, as well as the impact on local ecological resources and the wider region. He also reviewed the available instruments in the region for managing an oil spill.

10. He made a rallying call for Signatory States to urgently share their points of contact and assets. This will enable the region to conduct a capability mapping, identifying what resources are available and what additional technical support may be needed from relevant international partners.

The presentation is attached as Annex D

**Regional Threat Update
Dr. Ian Ralby-Auxilium Worldwide**

11. Dr. Ian Ralby began by noting that the current situation is a crucial issue with potential generational impacts on the region. He emphasized the need to consider that the Houthis might have an interest in causing the vessel to spill and create a catastrophic impact in the

region to assert their position. He highlighted that 48% to 49% of traffic moves through the Western Indian Ocean and to the Cape of Good Hope, which adds additional concerns and challenges. This suggests that the Houthis are now clearly collaborating with elements on the African continent, emboldening them. Many view the Houthis as having achieved significant success in opposing the West, which could motivate a renewal of past concerns related to terrorism and piracy, as well as new tactics that the region has seen the Houthis escalate over the past 9-10 months.

12. He noted that the Houthis view this situation as an opportunity for profit, disregarding the severe negative impacts it will have. He pointed out that the water cycle will change direction in October towards Suez, and a spill around that time would have severe humanitarian consequences, potentially harming the water supply for approximately 35 million people in the region. This would also impact shipping routes during that season, affecting trade.

13. He highlighted that the Houthis have progressed from aerial attacks involving drones and missiles to using advanced weaponry, including unmanned surface vessels and new surface vessels with repeated attacks. They also have access to unmanned underwater vessels and have shown a flagrant disregard for both human life and the marine environment. This disregard will continue to impact navigation safety in the region, including threats to environmental health, fishing, marine biodiversity, and coral reefs.

14. Dr. Ralby added that if this aggressive approach translates into a concern or threat on the African continent, there is a risk that, especially if the Red Sea is fully closed, their attacks might move aggressively into the Western Indian Ocean. They might see an oil spill in the Western Indian Ocean as less concerning. He stressed that this is an eventuality we must prevent. With the increasing burden on African ports due to weather-related groundings and containers coming off vessels at the Cape of Good Hope, this southernmost transit passage is a significant concern as the region progresses. He also mentioned that the Houthis are known for their inconsistency and unreliability, making it crucial to address the situation carefully.

15. He concluded by observing that it is important for the USA, UK, and Israel to remain less visible in the response to avoid aggravating the Houthis. He advocated for regional leadership in managing the crisis and coordinating the response.

The talking points are attached as Annex E

Joshua Hutchinson - Director of Intelligence at risk at Ambry.

16. Mr. Joshua Hutchinson provided context and background, noting that an armed security team was on board the MV Sounion during its initial attacks by the Houthis. Their company Ambrey has been appointed by the insurer as risk advisors for this operation. He confirmed that they have detailed information about the current state of the vessel and that salvage advisors from the insurers are implementing oil prevention and mitigation measures as the situation evolves. He advised the participants that, at present, there is no oil spill, and the superstructure is still intact. Regarding the fires on board, he noted that, according to naval experts and mariners, the fires are primarily from vapour burning. If it is indeed vapour burning, it could sustain for a long duration.

17. He raised the critical need for there to be interaction between his team and coalition forces in the area to ensure a safe and secure salvage operation.

19. He noted that there is a lot of assessment ongoing and that plans are being put in which the insurers have agreed to but the same has to be done with military intervention to ensure an immediate secure of the vessel with military support and moving the vessel away from the elevated insecure area to a safe place.

Dimitris Maniatis – Marisks

20. Mr. Dimitris Maniatis reminded participants that the incident was not an accident but rather a form of aggression and a maritime security threat, potentially an act of terrorism, as the vessels did not suffer this situation due to an accident.

21. He noted that before addressing the oil spill, it is important to understand the existing system to effectively manage the situation. He urged participants to consider questions such as whether there will be an STS (Ship-to-Ship) operation, where this operation will take place, whether the vessel will be further secured, and if there are any arrangements or negotiations with the Houthis for a ceasefire or confirmation that the vessel will not be attacked further during a salvage attempt. He also questioned whether a ceasefire could be trusted or if it might be a trap designed to facilitate further attacks on additional assets in the region.

22. He emphasized the need to consider the broader geopolitical and security implications concerning the humanitarian crisis and terrorist organizations known to be operating in Somalia, East Africa, and across the Sahel.

Deputy Commander - EUNAVFOR ASPIDES

23. The Deputy Commander of EUNAVFOR ASPIDES reported that, so far, there are no traces of leaking oil or a spill. He further noted that the vessel is not drifting and remains at anchor in the same position.

24. He noted that EUNAVFOR ASPIDES is working on diplomatic and political levels in Brussels and is awaiting decisions regarding engagement with regional partners. He added that the second line of operation is tactical and is still under planning.

25. He added that since EUNAVFOR ASPIDES' mandate is defensive, it is challenging for them to address protection issues. However, once approvals are in place, they will assess what actions can be taken. They are guided by their policy to ensure that their actions do not escalate the situation further.

Commodore Mark Anderson – CMF

26. Commodore Mark Anderson, the Deputy Commander of the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), noted that CMF recognizes the vessel's situation and the environmental impact of the threat. He mentioned that the assessment is indicative only and could escalate at any time, potentially resulting in a very catastrophic worst-case scenario.

27. He added that CMF's capabilities are limited; they do not have an escorting mandate. Instead, they focus on connecting people, rapidly disseminating information among military partners, and providing maritime environment training as part of capacity building in the region.

28. He thanked the RCOC and the DCoC for organizing the meeting and added that CMF is available to provide support within their mandate.

Plenary Discussion

29. Mr. Metse Ralephenya (South Africa) inquired whether there are additional support options for the region or if there are MOUs with formal international responders for such incidents. He emphasized the need for thorough engagement and raised the issue of a regional framework for preparedness and response. He questioned the readiness of the regional contingency plan, the commitment of Member States to it, and whether the Member States have resources available to respond to incidents in the region.

30. Capt Yeslem Mubark (Yemen) noted that Yemen will be adversely affected if an oil spill occurs, leading to increased malnutrition, food insecurity, and significant economic, social, and health impacts. He reported that Yemen has established a National Committee to address the issue and created a National Community area on IORIS, with plans to set up a regional Community area in IORIS to support escalating situations. They have also inventoried their equipment and called for support from neighbouring countries and partners, as the impact will be regional, necessitating collective action.

31. There was a query about the next steps in addressing the issue and preventing further regional insecurity caused by the Houthis.

32. Mr Yonis Adan (Somalia) highlighted the crucial nature of the situation, noting that the Houthis will not remain confined to Yemen. He drew a parallel with Al-Shabaab in Somalia, which is provoking innocent civilians and affecting navigation safety. He stressed the need for the region to prepare for further escalation beyond the Red Sea area and supported assisting Yemen, as the situation will impact the entire region.

33. Mr. Martin Cauchi Inglott (CRIMARIO) expressed satisfaction with Yemen's preparations and confirmed their readiness to provide support through the IORIS platform as needed.

34. Capt Sam Gontier (RCOC) noted the need for oil spill management software to assist in managing the incident effectively.

35. Captain Oliver Maina (Kenya) thanked the earlier speakers for their insights into the challenges of dealing with the Houthis and the incident. He inquired about the possibility of engaging the key state actor (Republic of Iran), not a member of the DCoC, through the IMO to take a leading role in managing the oil spill under OPRC mechanisms. He acknowledged the complexity of this issue, noting that while Iran's involvement could be beneficial, it remains a challenging matter.

36. Regarding communication and visibility, the meeting emphasized the need for caution to avoid escalating the situation and to ensure that communication is accurate and serious. It highlighted the necessity for a regional communication strategy and crisis communication plan to manage outgoing information effectively.

37. Mr. Mohammed Almagashi (Yemen) suggested engaging Oman as the lead facilitator for regional dialogue on the salvage operation. The meeting agreed that this is a valuable idea, as Oman has a stake in preventing the oil spill. Additionally, Egypt should be engaged, as it would also be negatively affected by the spill, worsening an already difficult situation due to reduced vessel traffic.

38. Capt Getinet Abay (Ethiopia) stressed that maritime pollution affects everyone in the region and called for regional and international cooperation. He emphasized the need for the DCoC to continue raising awareness and advocating for the safety of navigation.

39. Mr. Kiruja Micheni (IMO) emphasized the need to build regional capacity and capabilities, operationalize the three thematic areas agreed upon by the DCoC signatory states, including the sub-working group on Threats to the Maritime Environment, and ensure better coordination of efforts. He also underscored the importance of seamless information sharing and called for the swift operationalization of the DCoC Information Sharing Network, including multi-agency National Maritime Information Sharing Centres (NMISCs) in all participating states, with direct links to the RCOG and RMIFC. Additionally, IMO called for support in reestablishing ReMISC and in implementing the actions outlined in the DCoC's [8-point action plan](#).

40. RCOG thanked everyone for their participation and reiterated their availability to support the region and coordinate agreed-upon actions.

Summary of Deliberations

41. Having gone through the meeting, the participants agreed as follows;

- .1 NFPs to provide Points of Contacts and list of available oil spill response to the Secretariat who will forward to RCOG as this will assist to know the capabilities the region has in order to map out resources, and this will enable the reaching out to international community for further support based on what is available. This information will also assist engage the international community with how to engage the available capabilities.
- .2 Need for a strong information sharing as the foundation for dealing with the maritime threats effectively. There is also a need for operationalizing of the sub working groups and thematic areas to have an actionable way forward.
- .3 Need for regional capacity building was emphasized including supporting the ReMisc, the Somali and Yemen Coast Guard among other raised in the DCoC 8-action plan.
- .4 There is need to follow up on the diplomatic angles including speaking to Oman, Egypt and Iran to support the region and take a stand in the matter.
- .5 Yemen requested for support and technical assistance from the region and partners as the incident will have negative impact not only in Yemen but in the region as a whole.
- .6 NFPs to raise this matter in the next MEPC to be held in London in September 2024 and in the side meeting of the DCoC Donor Meeting where partners will be present.
- .7 There is a need to have a regional communication plan including a crisis communication plan for addressing the crisis in the region in a coordinated approach which will be factual and accurate.
- .8 The countries and partners interested in supporting the dialogue on the Red Sea Crisis and the way forward at the next High-Level Meeting so that key outcomes and resolutions will be agreed upon with actionable way forwards.

Vote of thanks:

42. The Chair appreciated the Signatory States and partners for their commitment and wished them well as they endeavour to work on the agreed items and looked forward to actionable way forward in addressing the crisis.

43. With no further business to discuss, the meeting concluded at 1605 hours EAT.

Annexes:

- **Annex A- List of Participants**
- **Annex B- Agenda**
- **Annex C- Talking Points by the DCoC Steering Committee Chair**
- **Annex D- Presentation by RCOG Director**
- **Annex E-Talking points by Dr. Ian Ralby**

Annex A- List of Participants

No	Name	Country
1	Nayef Issa Mohammed	Bahrain
2	Anfifidine Ali Toihr	Comoros
3	Ali Mirah Chelem	Djibouti
4	Capt Getinet Abay	Ethiopia
5	Abed Aldabet	Jordan
6	Oliver Maina	Kenya
7	Michael Mbaru	Kenya
8	Eugenio Muianga	Mozambique
9	Yonis Adan Adan	Somalia
10	Metse Ralephenya	Republic of South Africa
11	Mashudu Nephumbada	Republic of South Africa

12	Patrick Mbose	Tanzania
13	Capt Alex Katama	Tanzania
14	Mohammed Almagashi	Yemen
15	Capt Yeslem Mubark	Yemen
16	Cmdr Mark Anderson	CDOM CMF
17	Martin Cauchi-Inglott	CRIMARIO
18	Dimitris Maniatis	Marisks
19	Joshua Hutchinson	Ambrey
20	Santiago J. del Castillo	EEAS
21		EU NAVFOR ATALANTA
22		EUNAVFOR ASPIDES
23	Capt Lee Stuart	US NAVCENT
24	Cdr. Nelson	ILO MADAGASCAR RCOC
25	Richard Kettle	UK ILO RCOC
26	Shcwamb Jeffrey D	MADAGASCAR
27	Agnes Mukami Muriuki	Nairobi Convention - UNEP
28	Outam Kumar Gunness	NFP Mauritius
29	Capt Luke Fonseka	RCOC (ILO Seychelles)
30	Commander Javier De La Fuente	RCOC (LNO EUNAVFOR)
31	Abdoul-had A. Mouhoussoune	RCOC, Deputy Director
32	Sam Gontier	RCOC Director
33	Alex Ralairivony	RMIFC Director

34	Nick Flury	RMIFC Dep Director
32	Emmanuelle Hoareau	Legal advisor Auxilium Worldwide
33	Dr. Ian Ralby	Auxilium Worldwide
34	Kiruja Micheni	IMO
35	Winnie Maina	IMO
36	Esther Kung'u	IMO
37	Capt Anderson Mark	UKMCC-CDRE
38	Lt Cdr Richard Hobart	USA
39	Lt Cdr Furqan Muhammad A	U.S. Embassy Port Louis
40	LCDR Jake Coutre	U.S. AFRICOM
41	RDML Matt Kawas	US NAVCENT
42	Ebrahim Abdulla Alshaalan	Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain (United Kingdom)
43	Nayef Isa Mohamed Alshaikh	Kingdom of Bahrain
44	John Thompson	Ambrey
45	Ian Kiptoo	Blue Radio
46	Brian Gicheru	Blue Radio
47	Michael Mbaru	Kenya
48	Robert Peters	Ambrey
49	P.Alexandre	
50	Rohini Ralby	Auxilium Worldwide

Annex B-Agenda

<https://dcoc.org/wp-content/uploads/Agenda-NFPs-meeting-28-August-2024-.pdf>

Annex C – Talking Points by the DCoC Steering Committee Chair

<https://dcoc.org/wp-content/uploads/SC-Chairman-Talking-Points-28-August-2024.pdf>

Annex D- Presentation by RCOC Director

<https://dcoc.org/wp-content/uploads/PPT-MV-Sounion-Revised-By-Capt.-Sam-Gontier.pdf>

Annex E- Talking Points by Dr. Ian Ralby-Auxilium Worldwide

<https://dcoc.org/wp-content/uploads/Talking-Points-by-Dr.-Ian-Ralby-Auxilium-Worldwide-28-August-2024.pdf>