

**High-Level Meeting on the Implementation of the DCoC/JA – Cape Town RSA,
24-26 October 2023**

Message from the IMO Secretary-General

Distinguished participants,

I am delighted to join you all today, albeit virtually, for the High-Level Meeting on the Implementation of the Jeddah Amendment to the Djibouti Code of Conduct. This 6th meeting represents a crucial moment for us to come together and address the pressing issues affecting the security of the western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden; sample the progress we have made this far and consider the future we envisage.

Let me begin by acknowledging the gracious hospitality of the Republic of South Africa in hosting this meeting and ensuring a comfortable and memorable stay for all participants. Special acknowledgment goes out to the team within South Africa's National Department of Transport for their excellent logistical and administrative planning, which bodes well for the success of this meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Maritime safety and security are not mere rhetoric; they represent the foundational pillars upon which the global economy, environmental sustainability, and the welfare of communities worldwide rely. Our oceans, covering more than 70% of the Earth's surface, are the source of sustenance, transportation, and interconnection for billions. They are also essential to international trade, facilitating the transit of over 90% of the world's commodities by volume, thereby supporting livelihoods on a global scale.

Nonetheless, these indispensable maritime services face formidable contemporary challenges. Despite the reduction in piracy and armed robbery incidents against ships in the region since 2012, vices such as illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing (IUU), human trafficking and smuggling, marine pollution, wildlife trafficking, and crude oil theft remain prevalent. Additionally, new and emerging threats, such as cyber-attacks against ships and maritime business, as well as innovative methods targeting vital coastal installations using drones and mines, are evolving issues that demand our consistent attention and collaborative efforts. The implications of passivity extend far beyond the maritime realm, affecting global security, the environment and the prosperity of nations at large.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I understand that this meeting will address four key themes as advised by the planned panel discussions and briefings. They are:

- the operationalization of the regional Information Sharing Network in line with the agreed Strategy and Roadmap;
- the approval to expand the Working Group 2 Structure on Capacity Building to incorporate additional thematic areas covered by the Jeddah Amendment;

- the promotion of the effective utilization of the Regional Capacity Building Coordination Matrix as the primary tool for prioritizing regional capacity building initiatives for Member States and implementing partners;
- and finally, the approval for the development of a Regional Maritime Security Strategy.

It is imperative that participants create synergies of existing initiatives and frameworks in the region with like-minded objectives so that the Djibouti Code of Conduct and these frameworks work together to ensure sustainable growth of the region to the benefit of Signatory States, and to avoid duplication. Additionally, tools and capacity-building systems like IORIS, MERCURY and SeaVision will positively impact the region in times to come, not forgetting insights and best practices shared by India's Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region to the potential benefit of DCoC's Information Sharing Network, particularly concerning Vessels of Interest. Model successes on the importance of information sharing during sea operations from the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre and best practices of the Regional Coordination and Operations Centre in their maritime operations, are ideal considerations for the DCoC to adopt.

As we regard our work in light of posterity, there is urgent need for implementing partners, best known as Friends of the DCoCJA, to publicize and share information on their ongoing work with regional States, especially on needs and priorities drawn from the matrix. The DCoC website and the Members' Only portal where the matrix is hosted, provide good platforms for feedback from partners to reduce duplicity and promote frugality in the use of resources. Speaking of resources, the DCoC multi-donor Trust Fund has experienced dwindling contributions in past years especially following the successful suppression efforts on piracy and armed robbery against ships in the region. While I am very pleased to see that piracy incidents have reduced, there are other transnational organized crimes plaguing the region that need to be tackled and consequently, need resources to do so. My earnest call for current and potential partners present in this meeting is to continue supporting the DCoCJA in its expanded mandate financially and in-kind to ensure, as India has put it best: "Safety and Growth for All in the Region".

Let me also applaud the progress made by DCoC States in general, especially since the signing of the Jeddah Amendment in 2017. The region has been benefiting immensely from the governance framework created to coordinate DCoCJA activities through its Steering Committee, the two working groups on Information Sharing and Capacity Building Coordination, and the Friends of the DCoC forum. I am very encouraged by the progress made in developing the robust information-sharing network I alluded to earlier, to enable better coordination among all stakeholders in dealing with maritime threats at sea. Also encouraging is the development of the capacity-building coordination matrix to ensure that international assistance is aligned with regional needs and priorities, and enable partner nations to coordinate, deconflict, and amplify their bilateral efforts.

I am aware that a number of regional States are already working on developing frameworks for the implementation of the IMO model for the whole-of-government approach to maritime security, with technical assistance from IMO. I would like to thank the European Union for providing funding for this project through the Port Security and Safety of Navigation in Eastern and Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean, and the Red Sea Projects.

The recent completion of the draft Standard Operating Procedures document and its refinement by regional representatives in Jeddah and India respectively, exemplifies your commitment to establishing an effective regional mechanism to combat threats at sea. I have no doubt that the remaining work of establishing the multi-agency National Maritime Information Sharing Centres, which will be the pillars of the regional information-sharing network, will be completed in a timely

manner. The International Maritime Organization will continue to support the DCoCJA, and I fervently call upon the Friends of the DCoC and IMO Member States in this meeting to provide financial and technical support to Member States in the implementation of the Code of Conduct.

The Djibouti Code of Conduct/Jeddah Amendment is an indispensable element for the assurance of regional maritime safety and security and over the coming days, your insights and collective expertise in discussions will ensure that we continue fortifying the western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden for the prosperity and collective good of people, industry, and marine life.

Once more, I extend a heartfelt welcome to each and every one of you. In unity, we can navigate the complexities that lie ahead and set a course toward a maritime future characterized by heightened security and sustainability.

Thank you.
