

The Djibouti Code of Conduct/ Jeddah Amendment *Update*

SEYCHELLES, p 6

A From Bridge to Shore: Captain Valmont Leaves a Legacy of Maritime Excellence in Seychelles

REGIONAL COOPERATION, P.22

EU-Funded Initiatives Align to Secure Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden

SOUTH AFRICA, p.24

Interview: Dr. Carina Bruwer on Securing the Maritime Sector for the Next Generation

Table of Contents

Editor's Note	03	12	Stronger Maritime Links: RMIFC and Regional Ports Promote Info Sharing
DCoC Partners Assess Gains in Regional Maritime Security Initiatives	04	15	Charting Leadership at Sea: An Interview with Rear Admiral (JG) S.F. du Toit
Kenya's Maritime Security in Focus as Implementing Partners Gather in Nairobi	08	30	DCoC, CMF Expand Cooperation on Maritime Security
Regional Drive Intensifies to Safeguard Maritime Infrastructure	10	33	IN PICTURES: DCoC at ACSS, ReCAAP ISC

Editor's Note

Signatory States to the Jeddah Amendment of the Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC) are at a pivotal moment, as strategies begin to translate into coordinated action across the Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden. The anticipated launch of Working Group 3—endorsed at the 7th High-Level Meeting in Dar es Salaam—and the proposed DCoC Engagement and Regional Maritime Security Strategies signal growing momentum for regional cooperation.

This edition also honors key maritime safety champions. We reflect on the legacy of Captain Joachim Valmont, Seychelles' former national focal point, and his contributions to national maritime architecture. Rear Admiral (JG) S.F. du Toit shares his naval journey, while Dr. Carina Bruwer explores how regional collaboration can help secure a prosperous future for youth in the maritime domain.

We spotlight the growing impact of joint efforts by regional stakeholders and implementing partners to strengthen capacity on land and at sea. Through guest voices, we are reminded why inclusive, youth- and gender-responsive governance is essential to safer, more resilient maritime spaces.

Whether you're a seafarer, policymaker, researcher or advocate, we hope this edition renews your commitment to the DCoC principles of cooperation, ownership, and resilience.

Thank you for supporting the DCoC JA community.



**Signatory States to
the Djibouti Code of Conduct**

DCOC PARTNERS ASSESS GAINS IN REGIONAL MARITIME SECURITY INITIATIVES

Implementing partners of the Jeddah Amendment to the Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC/JA) met virtually to assess progress and advance maritime security across the Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden.

Facilitated by the IMO, the meeting gathered representatives from DCoC Steering Committee member States, partner countries, industry, and international organizations to align key priorities.



Participants listen in during the Friends of the DCoC meeting

DCoC Chair Mr. Metse Ralephenya (South Africa) highlighted strides in establishing National Maritime Information Sharing Centres (NMISCs) and efforts to operationalize the Regional Maritime Information Sharing Centre (ReMISC) in Aden. He urged continued support for member States in achieving a safer maritime domain.

Key outcomes included plans to launch Working Group 3 on Operational Coordination and Cooperation at Sea, finalize the Regional Maritime Security Strategy, and develop a DCoC Engagement Strategy. The inaugural WG3 meeting will be held in Mombasa, Kenya, from 1-4 September 2025, with support from international partners.

Participants emphasized the importance of building a regional database of Vessels of Interest, strengthening NMISCs, and accelerating capacity-building efforts. The meeting reaffirmed a collective commitment to regional maritime safety and cooperation. The full meeting report can be found [here](#).



"I encourage all Friends of DCoC to continue collaborating with member states in ensuring a more secure and prosperous maritime domain for the Western Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden."

*Mr. Metse Ralephenya,
Director, Department of Transport
(RSA)*

FROM BRIDGE TO SHORE: CAPTAIN VALMONT LEAVES LEGACY OF MARITIME EXCELLENCE IN SEYCHELLES

As the Djibouti Code of Conduct/Jeddah Amendment continues to shape maritime security in the Western Indian Ocean, it is timely to remember and honor one of its key contributors. Captain Joachim Valmont, Seychelles' former National Focal Point to the DCoC/JA, retired after decades of service. This feature reflects on his enduring legacy—one defined by leadership, reform, and regional cooperation.

For over 40 years, Captain Joachim Andrea Valmont has been a leading figure in the maritime sector, shaping Seychelles' maritime safety framework and influencing regional cooperation across the Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden.

Beginning his seafaring career in 1979, Captain Valmont spent over three decades at sea before becoming Director General of the Seychelles Maritime Safety Administration (SMSA) in 2011. His 13-year tenure (2011–2023) transformed the institution, strengthening maritime governance and positioning Seychelles as a respected international maritime actor.

Notably, he led Seychelles' inclusion on the IMO White List in 2015 and successfully guided the country through the 2016 IMO Member State Audit Scheme (IMSAS). As National Focal Point for the Jeddah Amendment to the Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC/JA), he coordinated national trainings and ensured Seychelles seized opportunities for capacity building.



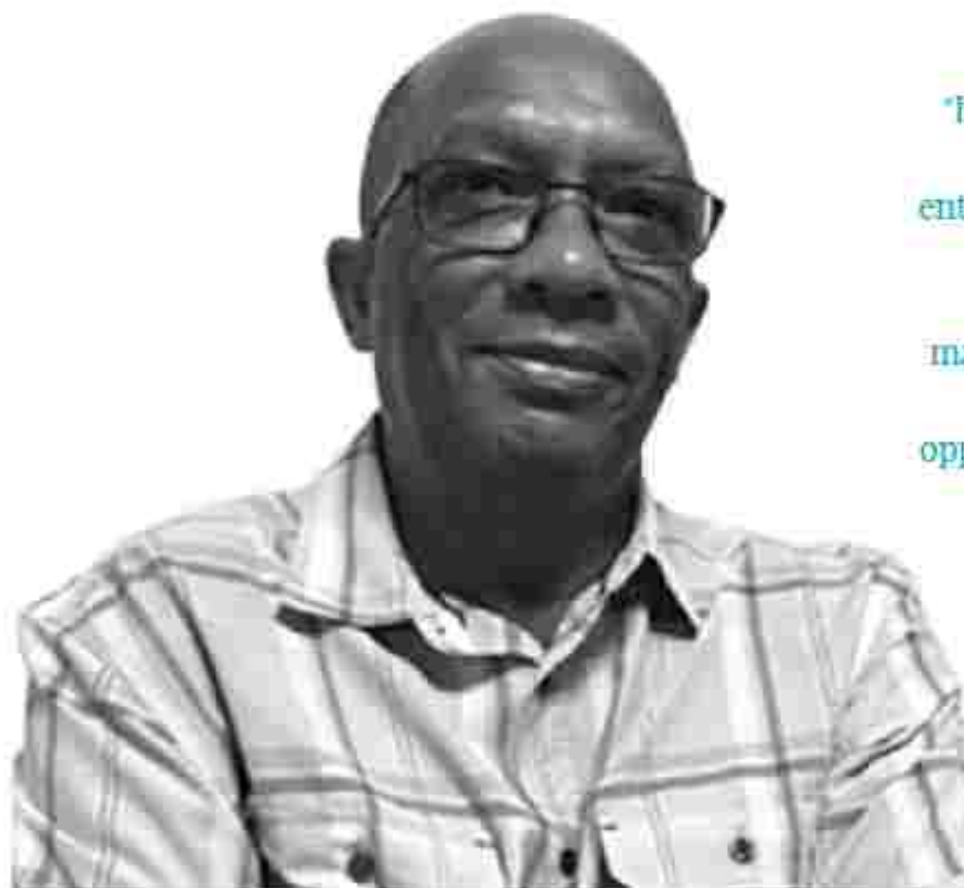
The 5th Sea Power for Africa Symposium was hosted by the South African Navy.
Courtesy: MARITIMAFRICA

Under his leadership, SMSA was restructured into the Seychelles Maritime Safety Authority in 2020, supported by new legislation, expanded to Praslin, and increased staffing from 8 to 22. He also played a key role in establishing the National Information Sharing and Coordination Centre (NISCC) and the Regional Coordination and Operations Centre (RCOC).

Captain Valmont contributed actively to DCoC/JA's Working Group 2, sharing Seychelles' piracy-era experiences and championing its evolution into a broader maritime crime framework. He supported the creation of WOMESA Seychelles, advancing gender inclusion in the maritime field.

He continues to contribute post-retirement as a part-time lecturer at the Seychelles Maritime Academy and an independent maritime consultant. A strong advocate for leadership continuity, he has called for a voluntary platform for retired maritime experts to support regional dialogue and initiatives.

Captain Valmont's legacy is one of reform, resilience, and mentorship—an enduring example of impactful leadership in maritime safety and regional cooperation.



"It was indeed a challenging one to start with, as I was entrusted not only to develop the Seychelles Maritime Administration to the maximum but to ensure that Seychelles took all the opportunities offered by IMO and the DCoC/JA"

Capt. Joachim Valmont on his role as the focal point for Seychelles to the DCoC/JA

KENYA'S MARITIME SECURITY IN FOCUS AS IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS GATHER IN NAIROBI



Implementing Partners support maritime security efforts in Kenya pose at Jessop House in Nairobi

17 representatives from seven countries and three international organizations gathered at Jessop House in Nairobi on 28 February 2025 for the 12th Maritime Coordination Group (MCG) meeting, hosted by the United Kingdom. The meeting focused on strengthening maritime security cooperation in the Western Indian Ocean.

Participants reviewed recent training activities with Kenyan maritime agencies, including the Kenya Navy, emphasizing the importance of real-time maritime information exchange and targeted legal and

operational capacity building. Kenya was commended for its increasing leadership in regional maritime coordination.

A Danish-supported study shared during the session flagged a resurgence of piracy off the Somali coast, underscoring the urgency of cross-border collaboration. Participants also discussed harmonizing surveillance tools and programs to reduce redundancy and enhance operational efficiency.



Participants listening to an update from the region

The MCG is an informal quarterly platform for implementing partners to review progress, address challenges, and support Kenya's efforts to combat maritime crime. Members reaffirmed their commitment to joint action, capacity development, and technological integration to ensure safer regional waters.

For more information, please refer to the full meeting report available [here](#).

REGIONAL DRIVE INTENSIFIES TO SAFEGUARD MARITIME INFRASTRUCTURE

African signatories to the Jeddah Amendment of the Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC) convened in Antananarivo, Madagascar (24–28 February 2025) for the West Indian Ocean Regional Maritime Security Seminar. The event aimed to evaluate progress in developing National Maritime Security Strategies (NMSSs) to safeguard maritime traffic and infrastructure.

Supported by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS) and DCoC, the seminar brought together 61 participants from Comoros, India, Kenya, Madagascar, Seychelles, South Africa, and the United States, as well as representatives from IMO, UNODC, WWF, and the African Union.

Sessions explored the intersection of land- and sea-based transnational organized crime, the impact of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and the need for integrated maritime strategies. Discussions highlighted uneven interagency coordination, fragmented legal frameworks, and a lack of stakeholder consultation as key obstacles to effective NMSS development.



Participants from the region and supporting entities

Participants emphasized the importance of regional cooperation, improved legal harmonization, and enhanced maritime surveillance. They called for stronger ties between the two regional centres in Seychelles and Madagascar and for the empowerment of the African Union's maritime security role through AIMS 2050.

Despite notable strides, the absence of validated NMSSs and national maritime information sharing centres (NMISCs) continues to limit operational coordination and information flow in many Western Indian Ocean states.



IMO Project Manager Mr. Kiruja Micheni (second from right) addresses the meeting

STRONGER MARITIME LINKS: REGIONAL CENTRE AND PORTS PROMOTE INFO SHARING



Article by Lieutenant Said Lavani
RMIFC Liaison Officer for Comoros



DCoC States' representatives were among participants attending at this year's RECOPT-ESA 25 joint exercise held in Madagascar.

Stakeholders from regional maritime centres and ports advanced information-sharing efforts through the RECOPT-ESA 25 joint exercise, conducted within the Indian Ocean, the Eastern and Southern parts of Africa (27 – 31 January 2025).

Led by the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC) in Madagascar, the Regional Coordination Operations Centre (RCOC) in Seychelles, and the Port Management Association of Eastern and Southern Africa (PMAESA), the exercise marked a milestone as the first of its kind in the Western Indian Ocean.

Participants* included port authorities, Port Facility Security Officers (PFSOs), and representatives from ESA-IO countries, supported by international organizations such as CRIMARIO, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and INTERPOL.

Additionally, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), the Port Security Project (PSP), as well as representatives from Somalia and South Africa, participated as observers, reinforcing the importance of inclusivity in regional maritime initiatives.

The simulation focused on incidents like stowaways, smuggling, theft, and illegal trafficking, aiming to test and improve Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and real-time data exchange between national and regional levels. The EU-funded IORIS platform was used for streamlined communication, demonstrating the importance of technology in maritime domain awareness.

Madagascar's Minister of Transport and Meteorology, Mr. Valery Ramonjavelo, opened the event, reaffirming national support for regional security. RMIFC Director Captain Harifidy A. Alex Ralaivivony thanked participants and acknowledged the support of the EU's Port Security and Safe Seas for Africa programmes.

RECOPT-ESA 25 underscored the importance of sustained collaboration, effective SOPs, and integrated technologies in strengthening maritime security and regional coordination.



** Participating entities included the Union of Comoros (Port of Mutsamudu Anjouan), the Republic of Seychelles (Port of Victoria and the Regional Coordination Operations Centre - RCOC), Tanzania (Tanzania Ports Authority - TPA), Kenya (Kenya Ports Authority - KPA), Madagascar (Port of Toamasina, Port and River Agency, Madagascar's Navy, and the Maritime Information Fusion Centre - CFIM), the Republic of Mauritius, and the Republic of Mozambique.*

ANNOUNCEMENT: INDUSTRY BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES RELEASED

BIMCO, International Chamber of Shipping, IMCA (International Marine Contractors Association), INTERCARGO, INTERTANKO & OCIMF (Oil Companies International Marine Forum), supported by over forty maritime stakeholders, released the latest Industry Best Management Practices (BMP) – Maritime Security document (31 March 2025). Read more [here](#)

The Best Management Practices – Maritime Security (BMP-MS) is a practical guide designed to help ships stay safe in areas where piracy and other maritime threats are a concern. Instead of focusing on just one region, it consolidates previously separate regional BMPs into a unified framework, offering a practical, threat-based approach to managing maritime security risks. This easy-to-use reference offers steps for crews and shipping companies on how to detect, avoid, deter, delay and report incidents. It also connects users to real-time regional updates, helping them stay informed while at sea.

BMP-MS is not just for ship captains—it's meant for everyone involved in keeping vessels safe, including security officers and shipping operators. It doesn't replace official rules, but it adds helpful, experience-based tips that make those rules easier to follow in real life. By using BMP-MS, ships can better prepare for risks and work more effectively with international navies and reporting centers, making global sea travel safer and more coordinated. Read more [here](#)

CHARTING LEADERSHIP AT SEA: AN INTERVIEW WITH REAR ADMIRAL (JG) S.F. DU TOIT

With a career span of over three decades, Rear Admiral (JG) S.F. du Toit has been a steadfast figure in South Africa's maritime defence landscape. As Director of Maritime Warfare at the South African Navy Headquarters, his leadership reflects a lifelong dedication to protecting and shaping the nation's naval capabilities. His story offers valuable insight into the evolving role of navies in regional maritime governance under the DCoC/Jeddah Amendment framework.

Briefly could you describe how you got involved in maritime security and the journey to being at your current role within the South African Navy?

My journey in maritime security began with a lifelong love for the sea and a deep commitment to service. As a second-generation naval officer, I was introduced to the ocean and the navy from a young age and quickly embraced the military lifestyle. I joined the South African Navy in 1990 as a seagoing officer and served across all classes of surface ships, including command of two mine countermeasures vessels, with an active sea career spanning 18 years.

In 2007, I transitioned ashore to serve as Senior Staff Officer for Mine Warfare and Diving, overseeing strategic underwater security capabilities, technology management, and maritime security research. I later held senior roles in joint training, including Commandant of the South African National Defence College. In 2023, I was honoured to be appointed Director of Maritime Warfare at Navy Headquarters.



Rear Admiral SF du Toit in Simon's Town during the Chief of the SA Navy change of command parade between Vice Admiral S. Hlongwane and Vice Admiral M. Lobese

In your current role, what contributions have you made to regional maritime security?

As Director of Maritime Warfare, I oversee the strategic preparation of the South African Navy's maritime warfare capabilities—including ships, submarines, and a maritime reaction force comprising marines, boats, and divers. These assets are deployed by the Chief of Joint Operations for national, joint, and multinational exercises to support maritime security in South Africa and the region.

I also lead the development of the Navy's Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) capability, focusing on two MDA Centres and a coastal radar surveillance network to strengthen maritime security along South Africa's coastline.

Briefly describe your involvement with the Djibouti Code of Conduct/Jeddah Amendment (DCoC/JA) and what you have experienced of this framework in the effort to repress piracy and armed robbery against ships in South African and the western Indian Ocean/Gulf of Aden?

I attended the 7th High-Level Meeting of the DCoC/JA in Tanzania (28–30 November 2024) in support of the South African Department of Transport, our national focal point. This marked my first formal engagement with the DCoC/JA framework.

A key outcome of the meeting was the decision to establish Working Group 3 on Operational Cooperation and Coordination at Sea, aligning with the recommendations from the Statement of Intent signed by African Chiefs of Navies during the 5th Sea Power for Africa Symposium held in Cape Town in October 2024. This is a crucial step toward operationalizing the framework and strengthening regional cooperation.

As someone directly involved in maritime security, I view the DCoC/JA as a vital tool in addressing piracy and armed robbery, particularly in the Mozambique Channel and broader Southern Indian Ocean. Its emphasis on regional buy-in and enhanced Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) sharing is especially valuable for member states lacking such capabilities.

In your career in the South African Navy, can you detail significant events that have challenged, and even changed your perspectives on maritime security and safety?

Over the course of my career in the South African Navy, I've encountered several defining moments that have shaped my understanding of maritime security. The surge in piracy off the coast of Somalia and its eventual spillover into the Mozambique Channel revealed the scale and complexity of modern maritime threats, reinforcing the urgent need for coordinated regional responses. Participating in search and rescue operations further underscored the importance of swift, well-coordinated action in safeguarding lives at sea.

My involvement in addressing illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing exposed the significant economic, environmental, and security risks it poses, highlighting the critical role of surveillance, enforcement, and international partnerships. I've also witnessed the far-reaching consequences of environmental disasters such as oil spills—events that underscored the close relationship between maritime security and environmental resilience, and the need for constant readiness.

Working alongside international partners during joint exercises and information-sharing initiatives deepened my appreciation for collaboration in confronting shared maritime challenges. At the same time, the integration of emerging technologies—like UAVs, satellite systems, and digital surveillance—has revolutionized maritime domain awareness and operational effectiveness. Finally, taking part in humanitarian missions served as a powerful reminder that beyond strategy and enforcement, maritime security is ultimately about protecting people and communities who depend on the sea for survival.

In your opinion, what common challenges hinder the effort to keep piracy and other illicit maritime activities from being fully repressed?

Efforts to combat piracy and illicit maritime activities face several persistent challenges. One of the most significant is the vastness of our maritime domain, which makes constant surveillance and patrolling difficult given limited manpower and resources.

Coordination gaps between maritime agencies, navies, and international partners further hinder timely, unified responses, while resource constraints limit our ability to invest in surveillance systems, advanced technologies, and capacity-building.

The transnational nature of maritime crime adds another layer of complexity, requiring legal harmonization and international cooperation to ensure effective enforcement. Meanwhile, criminal networks continually adapt their tactics, making it essential for security forces to stay ahead through innovation, intelligence, and ongoing training. Legal and jurisdictional hurdles often complicate prosecution efforts, while environmental factors like severe weather and maritime accidents can disrupt operations and delay emergency responses.



*"In the vast expanse of our oceans,
let us navigate with courage,
lead with integrity,
and unite in purpose
to safeguard our maritime
domain and ensure
a future where security,
prosperity, and harmony
thrive for all –
wishing you smooth
sailing ahead with fair
winds and following seas!"*

Rear Admiral SF du Toit,
Director of Maritime Warfare
South African Navy Headquarters

What practical solutions can South Africa and other DCoC/JA member states engage, to turn around the current status quo of regional maritime security (where attacks on commercial shipping in the last year have led to low trade activities in the Red Sea and raised the cost of shipping and goods in general)?

Enhancing maritime security in the region requires a combination of practical, coordinated efforts. One of the most effective starting points is increasing patrols and surveillance in high-risk maritime zones. Leveraging modern technologies—such as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), satellite imagery, and radar systems—can greatly improve Maritime Domain Awareness, enabling authorities to detect and respond to threats more proactively.

Equally important is the need for stronger collaboration among regional navies, coast guards, and maritime agencies. Joint operations, coordinated patrols, and real-time intelligence sharing through secure communication channels are critical to improving situational awareness and accelerating response times.

Building capacity remains a cornerstone of any effective maritime security strategy. Investing in training for maritime law enforcement, crisis response, and operational protocols equips personnel with the tools needed to respond swiftly and efficiently to maritime threats.

Robust legal frameworks are also vital. Streamlining prosecution processes and enhancing judicial cooperation can deter future crimes by ensuring that offenders are held accountable through clear, enforceable legal mechanisms.

Engaging local maritime communities—such as fishermen and coastal residents—is another essential element. By raising awareness, encouraging vigilance, and promoting the reporting of suspicious activity, coastal populations can become active contributors to early warning systems and overall maritime security efforts.

On a broader scale, regional cooperation through diplomatic engagement and multilateral agreements fosters a unified approach to common challenges. A powerful example of this is the concept of “Sisonke”—meaning “we are together” in Nguni—introduced by Vice Admiral Monde Lobese, Chief of the South African Navy. It calls for deeper cooperation, collaboration, and resource sharing among regional naval forces.

Finally, embracing innovation is key. The integration of smart surveillance systems, situational awareness tools, and digital information-sharing platforms can enhance monitoring, reduce response times, and increase operational efficiency.

In your role, how have you leveraged technology, innovation in improving maritime security in South Africa?

In my role as Director of Maritime Warfare within the South African Navy, I am responsible to direct the South African Navy's technology, as well as research and development requirements through various Defence Evaluation and Research Institutes and the Defence Industry. This provides innovative technology, as well as research and development solutions in support of the South African Navy's maritime combat capabilities, which in turn are utilized to enhance maritime security in South African and regional waters.

What advice would you give to young professionals and particularly women entering this field?

The next generation of maritime security leaders will play a vital role in safeguarding global trade, ensuring safety at sea, and shaping the future of ocean governance. To meet this responsibility, they must embrace innovation by adopting digital tools and data-driven technologies that enhance maritime domain awareness and operational efficiency.

Importantly, future leaders must champion inclusivity, creating space for diverse voices—especially women—to lead and contribute meaningfully. Above all, visionary and strategic leadership will be needed to set long-term goals, anticipate future risks, and drive collective action toward a safe, secure, and sustainable maritime future.

REAR ADMIRAL (JG) S.F. DU TOIT PHOTO GALLERY



1. In command at sea;
- 2 & 4 Poses in the South Africa Navy uniform;
3. with Captain Neo Mahlangu, the first African female to qualify as a Bridge Watchkeeper in the South Africa Navy.

Courtesy: SAN

EU-FUNDED INITIATIVES ALIGN TO SECURE THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN AND GULF OF ADEN

DCoC States in the western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden looks to strengthen information sharing and operational coordination through two major EU-funded initiatives—Safe Seas for Africa and the Crisis Response project—jointly valued at nearly €2.5 million. Implemented in close partnership with UNODC, INTERPOL, the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), IMO, and Expertise France, these complementary efforts aim to boost regional maritime security.

Safe Seas for Africa: Building Regional Synergies

With €1 million in funding over three years, the Safe Seas for Africa (SSA) project aims to enhance intra- and inter-regional cooperation among Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC) member states. Its inception phase focuses on developing a regional DCoC Engagement Strategy to strengthen communication, coordination, and reduce duplication among partners.

SSA will support DCoC Steering Committee participation in key forums like SHADE, CMF, and CUTLASS EXPRESS, and assist Kenya in finalizing its National Maritime Security Strategy. It also backs the operationalization of DCoC Working Groups, tracks progress via the enhanced Capacity Building Matrix and supports the DCoC Secretariat's implementation efforts.

To improve information sharing, SSA will conduct capacity-building assessments linking National Maritime Information Sharing Centres (NMISCs) with regional centres—RMIFC in Madagascar and RCOC in Seychelles. Initial assessments, targeting Kenya, Mauritius, and Tanzania, will establish baselines before deeper evaluations.

The project also promotes the domestication of regional SOPs, formalizes cooperation through MOUs, and develops a unified maritime vulnerability assessment framework under the Regional Maritime Security Strategy. These efforts will feed into the 2025 DCoC High-Level Meeting.

Strengthening Regional Maritime Security through the EU-Funded Crisis Response Project

The €4 million EU-funded Crisis Response Project for the Red Sea and Western Indian Ocean is advancing implementation of the Djibouti Code of Conduct and its Jeddah Amendment (DCoC/JA). Led by the IMO (€1.5M), with UNODC (€1.5M) and Expertise France (€1M) as co-implementers, the project supports the DCoC's 8-point action plan endorsed in January 2024.

A key focus is enhancing the Information Sharing Network (ISN) through capability assessments in 10 countries—Egypt, Ethiopia, Jordan, Maldives, Mozambique, Oman, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Somalia, and Yemen. The project will equip at least three National Maritime Information Sharing Centres (NMISCs) and provide training in system operations, data analysis, and maritime domain awareness.

Workshops will tailor regional SOPs for national use and strengthen links between NMISCs and regional hubs—RMIFC (Madagascar) and RCOC (Seychelles)—to improve coordination and responsiveness.

UNODC leads efforts to boost coast guard capabilities in Yemen and Djibouti, including training, equipment provision, joint exercises, and establishing a coordination platform to support bilateral cooperation.

The project also supports development of a Regional Maritime Security Strategy with the Indian Ocean Commission and other partners, activating Working Group 3 (WG3) to foster operational cooperation, use of shared tools like IORIS and Skylight, and closer engagement with international naval forces.

Building on previous EU-funded efforts like MASE and CRIMARIO, the project emphasizes regional ownership, sustainability, human rights, and gender equality. It adopts a whole-of-government approach to embed outcomes into national strategies while addressing broader risks such as human trafficking and forced labour.

INTERVIEW: DR. CARINA BRUWER ON SECURING THE MARITIME SECTOR FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

In this exclusive interview, Dr. Carina Bruwer, a Senior Researcher at South Africa's Institute for Security Studies, shares her unlikely journey into the maritime sector. She unpacks the evolving threats challenging safety of navigation in the region and offers timely insights on the need for practical cooperation under regional frameworks like the Djibouti Code of Conduct and the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy. She also speaks candidly about breaking barriers as a woman in a male-dominated field—and how the continent can build a more inclusive and resilient future for its oceans.

Most people who join the maritime field have a heritage associated with it; either they have lived in a coastal town or have a close family member who is or was involved in the maritime industry as a professional. What led you to this space?

Although I've always loved the ocean and regularly visited it as a child, I grew up in farming communities in Central South Africa about 6 hours from the ocean. I actually ended up working in the maritime space by chance when I was exploring options for my PhD research. Piracy in the WIO was a hot topic at the time, and I knew I wanted to focus on public international law, but I only decided to make the ocean my focus after I realized how complex the legal regime at sea is. I became fascinated by how international law plays out in the real world – such as when states and other actors try to govern criminal activity at sea, whilst having different interests, motivations, capabilities and perspectives on international law.

As an attorney and researcher, describe which maritime threats continue to impede the safety of navigation in the Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden? What recommendations would you share with countries within this region bearing in mind the different contexts in which they operate their maritime domains?

We've seen that threats continuously evolve, but they also re-emerge. Examples include the re-emergence of piracy around the same time as politically-motivated Houthi attacks on vessels in the Red Sea.

And then there is the ongoing transport of multiple illicit commodities, like drugs and wildlife products. The nature of individual threats is important from a land-based perspective because countries need to focus on how to prevent them from emerging or infiltrating their countries in the first place. But at the end of the day, if your maritime domain and your ports and coastline are secure and you have the necessary assets to respond to incidents at sea, the nature of the threat is less important.

In 2023, you said that the transnational nature of organised crime necessitates a borderless, cooperative response by African States both on land and at sea. As DCoC member states plan to establish working group 3 on operational cooperation and coordination at sea in 2025, what would be your advice on the matter?

The establishment of Working Group 3 is very exciting, because the biggest impacts are felt when efforts are implemented on the ground (or in this case – at sea and in operational contexts). We've seen the success that naval coalitions like the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) and European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR Operation Atalanta) have had in response to piracy and drug trafficking. Wouldn't it be amazing if WIO coastal states could replicate and take ownership of that success, even if in a different format? Of course, this is easier said than done, because everyone is struggling with limited maritime assets and large maritime domains.

But by starting small, such as through ship rider agreements, MOUs on hot pursuit, and regular interactions between WIO counterparts to build relationships of trust, and eventually perhaps building up to regular joint, and coordinated, patrols, it is possible. We've seen the negative impact of international support being withdrawn, and this should act as a wake-up call for African states to realize that they are the primary entities responsible for their own countries' well-being and security.



Dr. Carina speaks at a past event

How can the region ensure cooperation when implementing the three main frameworks supporting the African continent in maritime security and safety, that is the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy, and the Djibouti and Yaoundé codes of conduct.

Any Strategy or Code is only worth the paper it is written on if it is practically implementable and actually ends up being implemented. While undertaking to cooperate is an important step, we can only cling to the cooperation rhetoric for so long before it is time to cooperate operationally. The Law of the Sea allows and encourages cooperation, so too other legal frameworks like UNTOC. We do not need more statements of intent to cooperate, we need practical implementation. If there are legal barriers to this, they should be addressed. If there aren't assets to coordinate or to cooperate, someone needs to champion maritime security at a ministerial level since it is to everyone's benefit if the oceans are safe, and trade is facilitated rather than hindered by security threats.

The fact that very few WIO countries have national maritime security strategies (NMSS) suggests to me that the importance of the maritime domain has not yet filtered through to the highest levels of government. If it has, an NMSS will be a priority, and it will have a dedicated budget for implementation.

As a woman in a traditionally male-dominated field, how have you overcome challenges in this context?

Although females are underrepresented in the maritime security space, especially in security sectors, I'm happy to say that nearly all counterparts have treated me as their equal.

While I sometimes sense initial suspicion on the side of security counterparts who like to hold their cards close to their chest, I think this is a natural reaction towards researchers, not females, and it quickly vanishes once you illustrate your shared expertise and establish rapport. When hosting events or putting together panels, I always try to make sure we have balanced representation. Luckily, in academia and the NGO world, this isn't hard to do. I know quite a few female maritime security experts and we all celebrate each other's work.

Could you detail some of the initiatives you have been involved in that have promoted gender equity and youth involvement within the maritime sector?

When I do research, I specifically try to identify female participants to ensure that I have balanced views. Sadly, it is often quite difficult to find female representation, especially in more senior government positions. This is less so in the NGO space. I've also done quite a bit of lecturing, including at youth workshops, for junior naval and maritime law enforcement staff, as well as early career ocean professionals. Unrelated to work, I am an ocean swimmer, and our swimming group participates in initiatives aimed at ocean safety. If you can remove the fear of the ocean, it can open up an entire new world to a young person.

How can the DCoCJA and the continent make maritime careers more accessible and attractive to young people, particularly young women? (with reference to different ways in which upcoming generations (Gen Z, Alpha and Beta) are intent on changing the work-life dynamic.

Education about the vast array of jobs related to the ocean is key. No one ever came to my school and told me I could become a professional diver, a marine biologist, a boat engineer, a marine vet, or naval captain. Funding and scholarships for ocean-based careers are also incredibly important. And career mentoring for those who are already undertaking studies or training. Well paid maritime jobs are also important. The way in which these opportunities are communicated will have to take into account where young people get their information from these days – primarily on social media.

It has to be communicated in a way that draws their attention. And if you're a student or early career professional, nothing can replace hard work to carve out your career path. If you're passionate, hard-working and very intentional about networking, people will take notice.

How can we incentivize institutions, such as governments, academia, and regional organisations, to better support female and youth participation in maritime governance?

An institution that understands the importance of the maritime domain is most likely to champion it, which is why the maritime domain needs to be elevated to the top of political agendas. Institutions can also be much more intentional on how they advocate for the ocean to ensure that the general public is much more ocean-aware and ocean-focused. Ocean education in schools is vital. If we constantly emphasize that our ocean territories are bigger than our land territories and that we all depend on the ocean for survival, whether through its provision of oxygen, food, or regulating our climate, how can we not ensure that all genders and youths are motivated to participate in protecting it?

When decisions impacting the ocean are taken at government level, consultation with representatives from all walks of life is vital. Once should never underestimate the power of awareness, education and access. And don't forget to tap into the knowledge of our elders!

Looking ahead, what legacy or impact would you like to leave in the maritime sector, especially for the next generation of leaders?

It would be great if my research and engagements can inspire others to equally love the ocean and to always try and improve our relationship with it so that we don't just see it as something to be exploited for our own benefit, but as a living thing worthy of protection.

'I am an ocean swimmer, and our swimming group participates in initiatives aimed at ocean safety. If you can remove the fear of the ocean, it can open up an entire new world to a young person.'

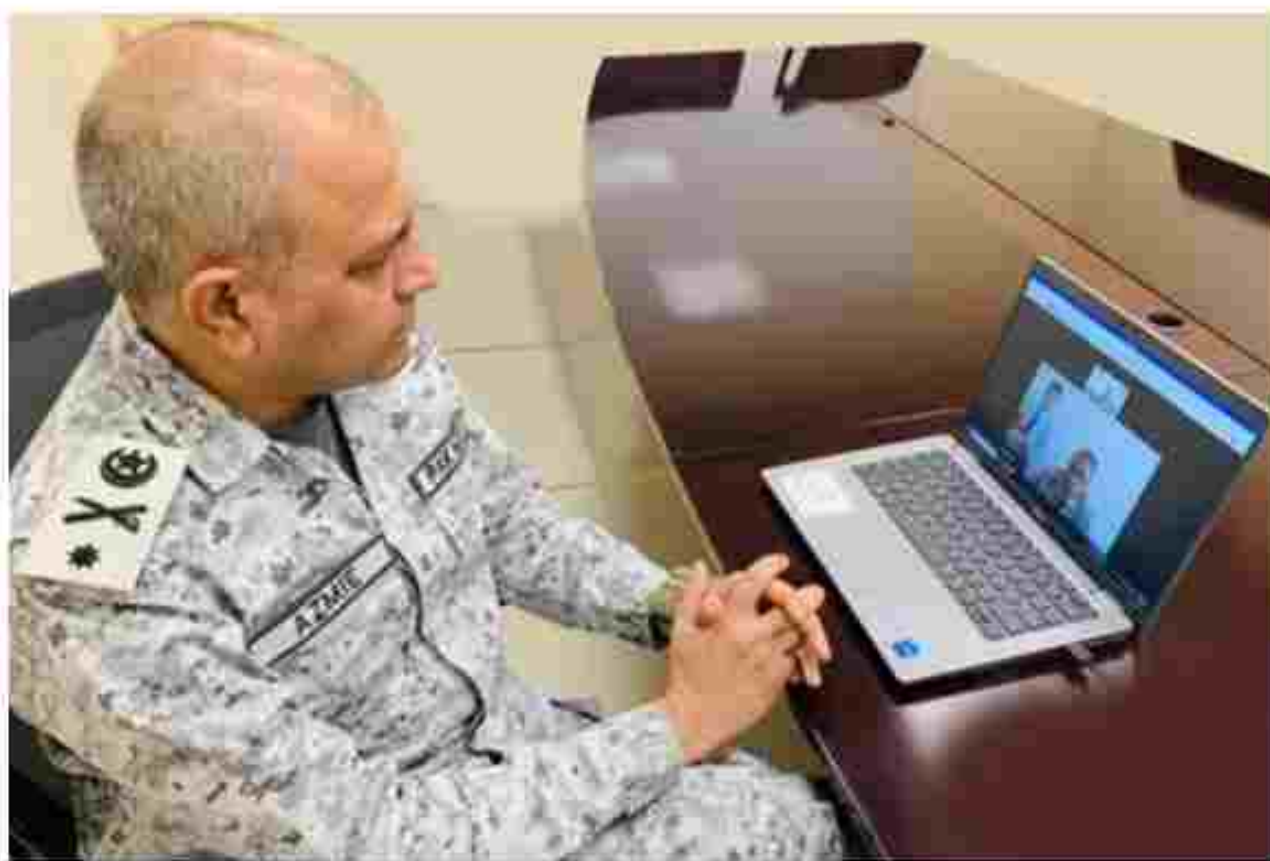
Dr. Carina Bruwer,
Senior Researcher at the
Institute for Security
Studies – South Africa



DCoC, CMF EXPAND COOPERATION ON MARITIME SECURITY

The Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC) held a virtual meeting with Combined Maritime Forces' (CMF) Task Force 151, led by Pakistan Navy Commodore Sohail Azmie (24 March), to strengthen regional maritime security.

The discussion focused on enhancing collaboration to counter piracy and maritime crime in the Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden.



Pakistan Navy Commodore Sohail Azmie in a virtual meeting with maritime stakeholders in the western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden. Courtesy: Combined Maritime Forces.

Mr. Kiruja Micheni of the DCoC Secretariat urged broader participation of member States in CMF operations and proposed Steering Committee involvement in future CMF conferences. Commodore Azmie supported closer ties, suggesting the appointment of a DCoC liaison officer to improve coordination and information sharing.

Both sides stressed the urgency of integrating regional and international efforts, including the launch of DCoC Working Group 3 on Operational Coordination at Sea. They also explored joint training initiatives with CMF, IMO, and UNITAR, and agreed to outline collaboration areas in a joint letter.

The meeting paved the way for Operation Sea Spirit, a multinational maritime security operation by CTF 151 in April, showcasing the operational coordination envisioned under the Jeddah Amendment.



Photo grids showcasing the counter-piracy focused operation SEA SPIRIT in the Gulf of Aden April 21-26. Courtesy: Combined Maritime Forces

This dialogue set the stage for Operation Sea Spirit, a multi-national maritime security operation conducted by CTF 151 in the final week of April. The operation featured coordinated patrols, surveillance, and real-time information exchange across high-risk waters. It represented the type of operational alignment envisioned under the Jeddah Amendment to the DCoC.

The DCoC Secretariat welcomed the operation as a practical expression of WG3's goals, noting that such efforts bridge the gap between regional commitments and operational realities at sea. Both sides pledged to continue structured dialogue, recognizing that enhanced cooperation is vital to secure sea lanes for coastal communities, global trade, and maritime safety.

"We are encouraging members of the DCoC Steering Committee to attend major CMF conferences and contribute to discussions on how regional states can work more closely with CMF in meeting our common goal of enhancing maritime security, combating illicit activities, and ensuring the safety of navigation in the region."

Mr. Kiruja Micheni,
IMO Project Manager,



IN PICTURES:

DCoC featured at the ACSS workshop in Madagascar



DCoC featured at the ReCAAP ISC in Singapore





DJIBOUTI CODE OF CONDUCT

Enhancing Maritime Security in the western Indian Ocean
and the Gulf of Aden



The Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC) has become the leading maritime security framework in the Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden, driven by committed Signatory States and supported by the IMO. Its governance structure includes a Steering Committee and working groups focused on information sharing and capacity building, with international partnerships supporting its objectives. Despite earlier successes, including a robust regional cooperation network, improved Maritime Domain Awareness, and revised national piracy laws, the DCoC Trust Fund has diminished due to shifting priorities. With renewed regional instability, the DCoC now emphasizes comprehensive strategies to address emerging threats, strengthen information-sharing networks, and enhance regional cooperation. The DCoC/JA also promotes greater female participation in maritime security efforts.

CONTACT US

We are tasked with increasing regional awareness of maritime related incidents in the region, which enables cross-agency, cross-ministry and cross-border communication and trust. We encourage guest contributions to the DCoC Newsletter. The DCoC Team will retain editorial discretion.

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