

## **Security and Safety in the Gulf of Guinea: The Role of Intelligence-Led Law Enforcement Strategy.**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The Gulf of Guinea (GoG) straddles sixteen countries from Senegal to the North-West of Africa down South to Angola and covers a stretch of over 6,000km. Starting from early 1950s till date, this region has gained in high economic importance as a hub of abundant deposits of hydrocarbon, marine, and rainforest resources, namely, oil and gas, fish and other aquatic resources, and timber and a very popular channel for shipping and international commerce. This paper, therefore, examined the wide range of situational and structural factors that have converged to make the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) gain its current notoriety as one of the most dangerous in the world, in equal if not to a greater measure as the Straits of Malacca and the Gulf of Aden. The paper also evaluated the relevance and impacts of country-level, regional and trans-regional initiatives already undertaken to tackle maritime insecurity in the GoG, given that insecurity on the seas increasingly portend grave danger to stability and prosperity for countries in the region. A key conclusion of the study is that faced with the dire consequences of maritime insecurity, countries in the region have so far not been able to develop a cogent and coherent maritime security policy, strategy or framework to effectively tackle the menace. The paper recommended that what is required and most desirable in the medium and long terms in order to establish effective and sustainable maritime governance regime is for GoG countries to move quickly and decisively towards the harmonization of policies and effective implementation. Beyond what has mostly been ad-hoc, token and symbolic national level responses, the path to follow would require collective action, the type that is supported by substantial continental and global commitments in the short, medium and long terms. Much more crucially, the paper vehemently rejected the military option that is based on violence-for-violence and the traditional and reactive method of policing that is incident-based in nature in the fight against insecurity in the region as these two strategies have all proved to be ineffective. In their place, the paper recommended diligent adoption of the modern and proactive method of law enforcement known as intelligence-led policing for the fight against insecurity in the region.*

**Keywords:** *Gulf of Guinea, security, insecurity, oil, gas, fish, armed robbery, piracy, intelligence, law enforcement.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Over the past two decades, there has been a surge in international concerns about maritime safety and security, with particular attention to the danger that insecurity on the seas pose to global commerce, peace and stability. This increased interest has, in turn, coalesced around the need to reflect upon and critically rethink conventional wisdom as it relates to the geopolitics of the seas, and to understand how much feeds into existing policies and actions at the national, regional, continental and global levels

Maritime security is an emerging issue in the Gulf of Guinea region (GOG), Energy security and trade depend to a large extent on sea-based transport, and the region is currently the source of around 5.4 million barrels of oil per day (BB/d), out of an estimated projection of proven deposits for the region to over 50.4 billion barrels (Ukeje and Mvomo Ela, 2013; Chatham House, 2013)

Clearly, promoting maritime security has become expedient give how poor attention to-as well as ineffective management of-the continent's vast maritime domain and assets has been directly linked to several emerging threats to peace, security and development. These threats range from the upsurge in pirate attacks which stood as 1,434 incidents between 2003 and 2011, to the risen in criminal activities linked to theft and illegal trade in crude oil, trafficking of persons, drugs, firearms and pharmaceuticals, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, waste dumping and pollution, to name just a few (Ukeje and Mvomo Ela, 2013:7).

Apart from the obvious impacts on the safety of oil infrastructure, global trade and other geo-strategic interest of major powers, these threats have also converged to make the waterways unsafe for the inhabitants of the littoral communities stretched along the estimated 6,000 kilometres of the Atlantic seaboard from Senegal to Angola who rely on the waters for their subsistence and livelihoods, and for countries within the zone whose developmental fortunes are inescapably tied to the sea and coastal areas. While the rise in piracy has intensified apprehension that the GoG has become a notorious "gangster's paradise", there has also recently been an increase in awareness of the need to mobilize concerted national, regional, continental and global actions to mitigate and reverse the tide.

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea accounted for nearly 30% of attacks (427 of 1,434) in African waters between 2003 and 2011, and that proportion is increasing (Ukeje and Mvomo Ela, 2013:9). Partly due to successful counter-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia (operation EU NAWFOR Atalanta) that have reduced piracy east of Suez, but instances of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea are also on the increase: 53 cases were recorded in 2011, compared with 39 in 2010, and a number of cases go unreported. This trend has continued into 2013 with attacks off the coasts of Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria and the Republic of Congo. (Chatham House, 2013; Traub-Merz and Yates, 2014).

Maritime security is essential to maintaining the flow of revenues from oil and gas, which have the potential to contribute significantly to development in the region. At the same time maritime resources such as fish, aquaculture and intact ecosystems directly contribute to the livelihoods of many Africans.

Fish stocks are an important source of protein for the region. Angolan annual per capita food supply from fish and fishery products over the period 2002-07 was 14gg per person – above the sub-Sahara average of 8kg –which is fairly typical of regional coastal nations. The poorest 40% of the regional population depend on fish as a crucial component of their diet (Chatham House, 2013). Illegal, Unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing by both foreign and African vessels is now a serious problem. The continuation of this activity will have an impact on the world fish markets as stocks are depleted. This global dynamic increases the incentive for a global solution.

Maritime security is important for exploiting maritime resources, security livelihoods and development. It should, however, be framed within national and regional policy that goes beyond immediate needs and reactive engagement. Such an integrated strategy includes environmental protection, management of fish stocks, tourism and the transport needs of landlocked countries. Neglect could result in acute security challenges in the future (food insecurity due to overfishing or environmental degradation of the seas, for example).

Much of the problem of oil theft may have root causes in Nigeria. The country has a population of around 150 million, and the average age is only 19. The Niger Delta is home to 30 million people, 30% of whom are unemployed. This does not just present an immediate domestic economic problem, but the toxic mix of organized crime, rising small-arms proliferation and insurgency, and high levels of youth unemployment has increased violence in the Delta region would lead to increased number of refugees and internally displaced persons. If 10% of the Niger delta population were displaced, then three million people would be dispersed around West Africa, dramatically escalating the problem (Onuoha, 2012).

On the other hand, the underlying problems and root causes cannot simply be pinned on Nigeria, and maritime security is a regional rather than a purely Nigerian issues as pirates cross international boundaries and attack foreign ship, and as many are located in different countries. This is evident in the rise of attacks elsewhere in the region. Some of the comparative scale of the problem in Nigeria may be the result of the country being by far the largest oil producer in the region. Beyond the issues of piracy, general maritime insecurity leading to IUU fishing is not only a regional but a global problem, as stock deletion caused by west African IUU fishing had an impact on the global market.

Ensuring the security of the Gulf of Guinea is beyond the capacity of any existing regional body acting along. A number of regional organizations share an interest in maritime security; these include the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Maritime Organization of West and Central Africa (MOWCA) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC). Geographical and mandate overlap argue for greater integration and coordination of maritime initiatives (Baker, 2011).

Of these various bodies, the GGC has the largest mandate for dealing specifically with maritime issues. It was established in 2001 as a permanent framework for collective action, with a view to ensuring peace, security and stability conducive to economic development in the region. Most recently, on 29 November 2012, the GGC signed the Luanda Declaration on peace and Security in the Gulf of Guinea Region. The declaration states that in response to increasing maritime insecurity, GGC member states need to establish regional cooperation and inter-state dialogue. There are a number of transboundary issues that require an inter-state approach, such as arms proliferation, crude-oil theft, terrorism and migration. As such, the declaration calls for the consideration of a permanent mechanism to enforce and monitor peace and security in the region.

In like manner and for decades, there has been this misplaced fixation that the solution to the increasing incidence of crime and criminality in the GoG lies squarely on the military option of counter-violence for violence, hence the increased presence of the navy personnel and coastguards. To this extent, therefore, the law enforcement strategy has almost been sidelined to the background and even where the law enforcement strategy is deemed to be embraced for a trial, only the old or archaic method that is based on the reactive or incident-based approach has often been preferred at the expense of the modern proactive method known as intelligence-led policing. Against this background, therefore, the mission of this paper is to evaluate the role the strategy of intelligence-led law enforcement could play in the onerous task of providing security and safety in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG).

## II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### Maritime Security

From an African perspective, according to a recent report published by the Brenthurst Foundation, *maritime security* is “anything that creates, sustains, or improves the secure use of Africa’s waterways and infrastructure that supports these waterways.” It accordingly encompasses “a vast range of policy sectors, information services and user communities, including maritime safety, search and rescue, policing operations, operational safety for offshore oil and gas production, marine environmental mentoring and protection, navy operations support”. (Ukeje, 2011: 83; Brenthurst Foundation, 2013: 169).

### Information and Intelligence

Intelligence and information are often used interchangeably by lay persons. But in professional terms, information is the raw materials from which intelligence is produced. Consequently, intelligence may be understood as refined information aimed at evaluating the impact of specific policies or for the identification, evaluation and mitigation of specific threats.

There are different definitions of intelligence in the literature. Intelligence, according to Lowenthal (2003:2), refers to:

*“Intelligence is a subset of the broader category of information; intelligence and the entire process by which it is identified, obtained, and analyzed respond to the needs of policymakers. All intelligence is information but not all information is intelligence”* (Lowenthal, 2003).

Intelligence products are essentially reports on specific issues and they may be categorized into current (*tactical*), forecast (*strategic*) intelligence, and on-the-field (*operational*) intelligence.

- **Strategic Intelligence:** Focuses on the long-term aims of law enforcement agencies. It typically reviews current and emerging trends, changes in the crime environment, threats to public safety and order, opportunities for controlling action and the development of counter programmes and likely avenues for change to policies, programmes and legislation.
- **Tactical Intelligence:** Actionable intelligence about imminent or near-term threats that is disseminated to the line functions of a law enforcement agency for purposes of developing and implementing preventive, and/or mitigating, response plans and activities.
- **Operational Intelligence:** Typically provides an investigative team with hypotheses and inferences concerning specific elements of illegal operations of any sort. These will include hypotheses and inferences about specific criminal networks, individuals or groups involved in unlawful activities, discussing their methods, capabilities, vulnerabilities, limitations and intentions that could be used for effective law enforcement actions (Lowenthal, 2003:119).

### Intelligence led policing

Intelligence-led policing has been variously defined. Smith (1997:1) offers the following extensive and insightful definition of the policing approach:

*“Intelligence-led policing involves the collection and analysis of information to produce an intelligence end product designed to inform police decision-making at both tactical and strategic levels. It is a model of policing in which intelligence serves as a guide to operations, rather than the reverse. It is innovative and, by some standards, even radical, but it is predicated on the notion that a principal task of the police is to prevent and detect crime rather than react to it”.*

On their own, Carter and Carter (2009:310), defined Intelligence-led Policing as:

*“The collection and analysis of information related to crime and conditions that contribute to crime, resulting in an actionable product intended to aid law enforcement in developing tactical responses to threats and/or strategic planning related to emerging or changing threats* (Carter and Carter, 2009).

The common elements of intelligence-led policing models, according to Porter (1997), are:

1. The production of accurate and timely intelligence and analytic products, relevant to the operational goals of the agency that describe the nature and extent of problems affecting the jurisdiction.
2. The use of these intelligence and analytical products to develop and guide a strategy, operational plan or course of action that addresses the problems.
3. Continuing evaluation, follow-up and accountability to determine the impact of the strategy or operational plan on the problem, making adjustments as needed (Porter, 1997:31).

### Surveillance

Surveillance is defined as the act of patrolling a given area with the purpose of identifying criminal acts or behaviours likely to cause breach of peace, law and order (Zems, 2013: 212).

### III. SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

- **The Geographical Scope of Gulf of Guinea (GoG)**

The GoG is a vast, diverse and highly important region. It constitutes about 16 countries that are strung along roughly 6,000 kilometers of unbroken coastline. From the north-western coast of Africa downwards, these countries include Senegal, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, the island state of Sao Tome and Principe, Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Angola on the southernmost fringes (Ukeje and Mvomo-Ela, 2013; Chatham House, 2012).

- **The Economic Importance of Gulf of Guinea**

Historically, the GoG (sometimes referred to as the “Bight of Benin”) was critical to the penetration, advancement and consolidation of the European colonial enterprise and presence in Africa via missionary, commercial and consular activities (Ukeje, 2011). Thus, at the peak of European pacification missions in Africa, the GoG was a theatre for unprecedented economic, political, diplomatic and military intrigues/rivalries among key European colonial powers jostling to gain access to and control new territories. During that period, the GoG was the hub of extensive trans-Atlantic trade relations linking Africa with Europe, trade relations which at various times was dominated by the export of slaves, palm oil, rubber, ivory, gold etc, and the importation of sundry goods such as firearms and ammunition, liquor and spirits (Obi, 2011).

In recent times, the GoG waterways have served as a critical gateway to the world for virtually all its littoral countries, but also for land-locked countries including Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad and the Central African Republic, which depend on access to the sea for the import and export of goods and services from and to major global markets. With globalization, the region is also fast becoming pivotal to international navigation as a relatively safer, if longer, route connecting the Far East to countries in the North and South of the Atlantic. Given that over 90% of global freight is by sea, the GoG has become a veritable sea-route for international trade and commerce, especially now that the shorter Arab Gulf passage is costlier and riskier due to wars and piracy in the Middle East and North Africa

(Trelawny, 2013) it has also become the new frontier for what is widely touted as the “second scramble” for Africa; only that this time, the prize is not territories but access to and control of newly discovered vast hydrocarbon resources. In addition to established oil producers such as Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Angola, several West African countries including Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Senegal have made discoveries of crude oil in commercial quantities, bringing the estimated projection of proven deposits for the region to about 50.4 billion barrels (while actual production is about 5.4 million barrels per day). Furthermore, the GoG is widely known to be home to a substantial bio-diversity of marine and rain forest resources, especially fish and timber; resources that are highly prone to imprudent exploitation in the context of weak or non-existent national and regional regulatory frameworks for extraction and exports.

What is evident from all the above indicators is that the design and implementation of any effective maritime strategy to tackle threats to regional security must take cognizance of the unique and also multifaceted nature of maritime insecurity.

- **Why the Gulf of Guinea Is Important: A Highlight**

- *Geographical location:* It is an important maritime route for commercial shipping from Europe and America to West, Central and Southern Africa. Its proximity to Europe and North America for the transportation of the low-sulphur crude oil from the region further raises its importance in the global supply of energy.
- *A major source of hydrocarbon resources:* The region produces about 5.4 million barrels of crude oil per day. The United States sources 15% of its supplies from the Gulf of Guinea, and China and Japan depend on it for a substantial amount of their oil and gas. It also continues to supply France and other countries of Europe.
- *Investment:* Oil companies from the West and the East have made huge investments for both onshore drilling, and since the region has the fastest rate of discovery of new oil reserves in the world, it also attracts new investments for further exploration.
- *Rich fishing and other marine resources:* Fishing trawlers come to the region from all over the world. Many are there illegally as a result of inadequate and inappropriate security checks.
- *Rich forestry, agricultural and mineral resources:* All these are exported through the Gulf of Guinea to markets in Europe and America.

**Source:** Adapted from Chatham House (2013:8).

- **The Trends of the Festering Insecurity in the Region**

Until recently, countries in the GoG focused on land-based threats to security while the maritime dimensions were hardly considered in the design and implementation of security and defence options and strategies. At a level, this may be partly due to capacity deficit which many countries in the region face in terms of the acquisition, maintenance, deployment and regulation of necessary resources required to establish and exercise credible presence on the territorial waters. Thus, what is in place currently does not seem to effectively deter criminal elements and violent social movements whose activities now threaten security and stability in the region. Indeed, the military response of some of the states as well as international actors which have interests in energy resources in the region appears to have worsened the security situation mainly by increasing the risks of weapons proliferation and deepening human rights abuses. (Ukeje and Mvomo Ela, 2013).

This creates a policy dilemma for governments and other stakeholders who justifiably feel compelled to clamp down on crime and violence with legitimate force; however, these actors cannot guarantee that the state security forces would refrain from committing abuses which would invariably deepen resentment and fuel insecurity. To put the growing instability into perspective, a recent report by Chatham House noted that “the high rate of piracy in the GoG represented a significant ratio of attacks in African waters, due to unsuccessful counter-piracy operations” (Chatham House, 2013:8). This indicates that there is growing realization of the impact of poorly executed military responses to instability in the GoG and underlines the need to comprehensively rethink existing strategies.

There is strong evidence to suggest that the growing attacks, several of which have brought harm to crew members and vessels, are not opportunistic but rather well-orchestrated actions by networks of local and international criminal gangs often acting with the connivance of citizens and government officials in GoG countries. These attacks reflect deeper governance and security dilemmas which the countries face both as individual countries and collectively as a group of countries. Regardless of the conditions that may have contributed to the incubation of maritime insecurity, it is obvious that any creative and sustainable solution must incorporate the interests and inputs of multiple actors, and agencies across West and Central Africa. Solutions must also be pursued in a coordinated manner within both national and regional spaces (Ukeje and Mvomo Ela, 2013), and at best by use of intelligence-led law enforcement strategy to be complemented with other strategies including the good governance option (Obasi, 2013). While the maritime security challenges facing the GoG are not peculiar, their manifestations represent two profound contradictions. First, and perhaps the more obvious, is that although the region’s waters have been some of the most lucrative both for legitimate and illegitimate activities, GoG states are among the poorest and worst governed states in the world (Obi, 2010).

Indeed, in most of the countries, the exercise of state control is very lean and pales as one moves away from their capitals into the hinterland, or towards the coastline and into the territorial waters. Apart from Nigeria, and to a lesser extent Angola, no other GoG country boasts of any significant naval or coastguard capability to constitute effective deterrence or counter-measure against growing maritime crimes. This is a debilitating weakness if one considers the pivotal role that GoG waters play in the extractive industries that underpin most economies in central western African.

Second, despite substantial revenues from natural resources, virtually all GoG countries face daunting governance and social deficits. (Onuoha, 2013). They are not only some of the worst in terms of human development indicators but grossly deficient on most governance indexes such as open and transparent government, respect for the rule of law, free press and the conduct of regular and crisis-free elections. The very fact of resource abundance has, paradoxically, become a “curse” on the ability of these states to build effective and sustainable governance structures and institutions.

The last contradiction is that while its huge potential is not lost on governments and the international community, the GoG waters have become a breeding ground and safe haven for a network of local and international criminal elements whose transnational criminal activities undermine security in the entire region and threaten the supply of critical resources to the global market. (Okonmah, 2011; Sandoz, 2012).

- **The Consequences, Implications and Challenges Faced.**

An obvious consequence of these developments is that the GoG has become a significant in the security makeup in Africa. The rise in insecurity and the instabilities associated with them has a wide range of implications. Apart from the much-touted ones such as piracy and violent crimes at sea, there are other less acknowledged but equally vicious ones which impact directly on the livelihoods, cultures, histories and social identities of coastal communities whose fortunes are tied to the maintenance of safe and secured waterways. Some of these implications include environmental degradation, distortions in the economies and widespread social anomie. The challenge for analysts and policy makers alike is to understand the critical interfaces between maritime and onshore insecurities and beyond this, to adopt appropriate measures that can address uneven development which underpins many security challenges. This scenario makes the maritime environment a top

security priority for the international community. According to The New African, Western Africa is the “new danger zone” of “international waters” (The New African, March, issue 526).

Acting on the concerns of the international community, therefore, the United Nations with the collaboration of other development partners-has underlined the seriousness of the problem by encouraging the establishment of a regional integrated system of maritime security and safety in the GoG. Growing attention to the challenges posed by maritime security in the GoG is an acknowledgement of the urgent need to transcend the orthodox-but mostly narrow-overwhelming focus on addressing land-based threats to incorporate sea-borne threats, and equally worrisomely by use of the obviously tired model of reactive incident-based law enforcement and military tactics (Lowenthal, 2003; Smith, 2007; Porter, 2007; Carter and Carter, 2009).

Thus, a more robust understanding of maritime insecurity as articulated in the current study starts with a throw-back to the collapse of the foundational values linked to security and safety of navigation, international trade, use of offshore resources, marine ecosystems and the stability of society and the state in Africa. By way of tentative observation, therefore, what this study demonstrates is that the rise in maritime insecurity. In its different manifestations, it nurtured by: (a) acute fixation on an economy based on revenues from natural resources, particularly oil; (b) negligence of threats emanating from the seas by the post-colonial state; and (c) absence of adequate, coherent and effective operational strategies to galvanize national, regional and international efforts.

What the foregoing discourse suggests is that while the current focus by the international community is often on piracy and other crimes on the high seas, it is impossible to disentangle the threats to maritime safety and security from the legion of challenges linked to political and governance crises in the region. By acknowledging them as trigger factors, it becomes less cumbersome to account for all the spatial contexts within which maritime security challenges emerge. More importantly, it is necessary to include such contexts in the design of appropriate policy responses. After all, these different spatial contexts impact on maritime security in the GoG in different but profound ways than policies have cared to reconcile with. In this regard, there are three apparent and mutually-linked spaces to anchor a more nuanced approach to understanding the nexus between maritime security and broader issues of security and development in the GoG. The features of the three spaces-domestic or national, regional and global-and how they are interconnected are discussed in greater detail in Section 3 of this report.

#### **What are the Challenges Faced?**

- *Area:* The Guinea is a vast expanse of water, stretching almost 6,000km from Senegal to Angola, with weak surveillance and uncoordinated security patrols. An over-concentration on land security in the region over a long period of time has left the maritime domain unpatrolled.
- *Economic:* There has been increased incidence of armed robbery at sea and piracy; theft of hydrocarbon resources on the high seas/illegal bunkering; pipeline vandalism; illegal trafficking in arms, drugs and persons; and illegal unreported and unregulated fishing in the waters of the region.
- *Political:* The maritime domain becomes a good breeding ground for dissent to grow and fester, with devastating effects on the home governments of dissidents. One specific political challenge is poverty among the host communities of the rich natural resources of the region.
- *Environmental:* Particularly pollution from exploitation and exploratory activities, and accidents from oil spills.
- *Legal:* There are unclear definitions of piracy and armed robbery at sea, as well as an inadequate legal framework for prosecuting criminals when intercepted.

**Source:** Adapted from Chatham House (2013).

#### **Manifestations of the Diverse and Complex Insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea**

1. **Piracy and Armed Robbery:** Maritime insecurity is multidimensional, multifaceted and complex in nature. Contemporary international maritime law makes a distinction between two acts of violence at sea: (a) piracy (perpetrated on the high seas) and (b) armed theft at sea (depending on the maritime zone in which the act was against economic, military and security poses a fundamental security dilemma not only for the governments across the GoG. All these acts are, however, closely connected because they involve the same kind of actors, use similar modes of operation and oftentimes lead to the same adverse results. Another challenge to implement an effective maritime security governance strategy is that institutions and governments in the GoG are generally ill-equipped and poorly places to recognize the distinctions and manage them. Already, in some countries and to varying degrees aspects of maritime security been partly privatized or managed through public-private partnerships (P.P.P). This is the case in Cameroon, for instance, where the government has established some partnerships with a private outfit, the Rapid Intervention Battalion (RIB-Delta), an armed force unit, for the protection of ships and oil platforms within

the country's maritime domain. Although such an innovation might seem unsustainable in the long run, it definitely points in the direction of now recurrent problems associated with the lack of capacity by the state could be tackled.

2. **Trafficking in Narcotics, Persons, and Fake and Substandard Medicines:** According to a recent study published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), organized transnational crimes such as theft and oil bunkering, trafficking in small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their ammunitions, human trafficking and illegal migration, to name a few, have been on the rise along the coast of West (and Central) Africa since early 2000 (UNODC, 2013:68). While these crimes have been widely acknowledged in public debates, their far-reaching impacts are often overlooked and not adequately addressed. Today, the GoG has become one of the preferred transit hubs in the global trade in narcotics and psychotropic substances largely from South America, as well as destination for fake and sub-standard pharmaceuticals coming from Asia and the Far East (Ukeje and Mvomo Ela, 2013:21). According to the UNODC, cocaine transiting through West Africa originates from three main sources: Colombia, Peru and Bolivia. Similarly, Brazil has been a longstanding supply source for lusophone West African countries especially Guinea Bissau which has become a conduit for re-exporting to several other countries in the region. The report also showed that Nigerian ports, as the leading regional hub for containerized shipments, have become strategic for large quantity transshipment of drugs from south America into Europe, North America and the Asian markets (UNODC, 2013). Thus, as the GoG region has become a major hub in the global drug trade and other illicit commercial activities the region faces daunting challenges that are capable of undermining already slow, sometimes painful, development efforts. This is evident, for instance, in how more people are becoming addictive users of narcotics such as cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine. At the same time many parts of West and central Africa are experiencing adverse health effects of the spread of fake and sub-standard pharmaceuticals including some 37 tons of illicit painkillers seized in West Africa, mostly in Benin and Togo, in 2012 alone (Watts, 2007:638).
3. **IUU Fishing and Ecological Risks:** In the context of poorly policed maritime domain, weak legal and regulatory framework on fisheries management as well as poor national shipping capacity to engage in fishing for local consumption and export, the GoG waters have become a haven for foreign fishing trawlers. It is practically impossible to ascertain the real impact of illegal, unregulated and undeclared fishing (IUU Fishing) although experts estimate that 11 to 26 million tons of sea products are extracted annually in that manner (Ukeje and Mvomo Ela, 2013). Over all, IUU fishing is at the root of unsustainable management of fishery resources, leading to poor intake of protein and other essential nutrients among coastal communities as well as accounting for a major loss of revenue for coastal states who previously earned a lot of foreign exchange by granting fishing rights on their water (Obasi, 2011:587; Middleton, 2008). Although evidence is still tentative, IUU fishing could potentially lead to the endangering of rare and vulnerable species, further undermining the coastal ecosystems and biodiversity. Finally, IUU fishing could constitute an environmental danger due to the frequent use of damaging procedures and toxic products.

### **Factors that Lead to and Sustain Insecurity in the Region**

Insecurity, in the GoG is characterized by complex factors and manifestations. These factors can only be situated within the context of historical and contemporary developments. Regrettably, discussions on the insecurity challenges in the GoG have all too often focused more on treating the symptoms (i.e. how to repress piracy and other criminal activities that threaten international commerce and resource security). This being the case, the root causes of the problem which stem from decades of bad governance and truncated developmental aspirations for the vast majority of citizens living in the GoG are often overlooked. Given that the policy and political leadership of some GoG states may be implicated in creating the problems in the first place, it is precisely by returning to "the uncomfortable but critical agendas of social economic and political development" as a prerequisites for security that the GoG states can hope to resolve the threats on the sea (Ukeje and Mvomo Ela, 2013:13). In this section, some of the key structural and situational factors that not only lead to the rising incidence of insecurity in the region but that serve as obstacles to its fight are briefly discussed.

1. **The Flip Side of a Thriving Maritime Economy and the Vastness of the Geographical Area of the Region:** In the context of a growing neoliberal globalization, the sea has become a critical channel of international trade. In the words of Emmanuel-Marie Peton, "it is essentially a maritime economy, seeing that over 50,000 ships cover 80% of world trade, fundamental to our societies' lifestyle; that 80% of trade in hydrocarbons is conducted through marine channels and mineral resources transported by sea serve for production in factories and industries (90% of iron minerals)" (Peton, 2010:111). The flip side, of course, is that the thriving of a global maritime economy has invariably led to a corresponding rise in maritime insecurity. First, this is because "oceans are by nature grey areas, for the most part, often escaping State control, the immensity of their stretch makes them impossible to manage." Second and especially, "since

2008, maritime areas have been unable to impose controls on their territory. Such ‘ungoverned’ zones become production sites or transit routes for sundry criminal activities particularly the trafficking of drugs and arms”.

2. **The Profit-Based Economy: The “Dutch Disease” or “Resource Curse”.** For most countries in the region, huge revenues from the oil and gas sector account for the bulk of national earnings. Such excessive reliance on profits from the production and sale of hydrocarbon resources has transformed several of the countries into rentier economies or what Mbembe described as “off shore States”, that is states whose survival is heavily dependent on revenues they receive by way of rent from the sale of strategic natural resources such as crude oil and gas (Mbembe, 2014:351). Although it is by no means a ‘basket case’, the profit-base of several GoG countries is exemplified by the experience of Equatorial Guinea. In that country, oil production and revenue have been on the increase while traditional sectors such as agriculture (cocoa) and lumbering (wood) are jeopardized and abandoned. It is not by accident, therefore, that the economy of that country is overwhelmed by incidences of rising unemployment and inflation. Rather than drive other sectors of the economy, the oil industry in Equatorial Guinea has transformed into an economic enclave, as elsewhere in other GoG countries. This phenomenon, popularized by Terry Lynn Karl in analysis of the petroleum industry in Brazil as “the paradox of plenty”, is based on the popular theory of rent-seeking or the “Dutch Disease Syndrome” in which the systematic destruction of an economic system occurs through excessive reliance on rent from natural resources, corruption and waste of revenue (Karl, 1997:200; Okonjo-Iweala, 2012:2). GoG states are also characterized by the tendency for governments to establish a system of centralized management of national wealth marked by the confiscation of oil revenues by the central government and the national elite who, in turn, use them to dispense and lubricate extensive but informal political patronage systems. This notorious feature is best captured by an International Monetary Fund (IMF) study conducted in 2005 which showed that 5% of the population of Equatorial Guinea held 88% of the country’s wealth while the other 95% of the population must content itself with the remaining 12% of the wealth. Invariably, such inequality triggers and exacerbates the decay or outright collapse of social infrastructure as well as perennial tension/violence. The oil-profit economy does not stop at creating conflict and insecurity but also contribute to their sustenance. This is as a result of the corroding effects of a corrupt system borne out of an economy in which the bulk of the profit is channeled towards the state (regime) and its apparatus rather than to the welfare of the citizenry.
3. **The Ineptitude of the Post-Colonial State:** The state in Africa was established to serve as an instrument for the domination and exploitation of resources by the colonial powers in Europe. In virtually all cases, the post-colonial African state has not been able to refit that warped design. This has led to the states incapacity or unwillingness to accomplish even the most basic sovereign duties and responsibilities, including establishing law, order, security and social cohesion. Designed from a purely utilitarian perspective and in a global geo-economic context, the post-colonial African states which emerged from old colonial domains seem to have been starved *ab initio* of any real capacity to exercise sovereignty over their maritime territories. This situation continues to impact negatively on the ability of the states to maximize maritime resources. It also explains in part the absence of a clear vision of maritime governance, sea culture and its potentialities, and constrains the states from having a holistic view of maritime security or making the necessary linkage between land and maritime security. Pirates and other perpetrators of violence at sea act by taking profitable resources by force, and through resistance and symbolic actions. Failure of the state in the governance of its maritime zone, ironically the lifeline of some of the states in many ways, has become an opportunity for pirates and criminal groups to affirm themselves. Addressing the issue, in which she foresees the signs of a possible “Somalia syndrome” in the GoG, Gisele Ndo’o emphasizes that the majority of pirates operating at large off the Cameroonian coast score themselves on the same grade as those movements calling the shots in Niger Delta (Ndo’o, 2009:113).
4. **The Presence of Private Military Contractors or Private Security Companies:** The growing visibility and direct involvement of Private Military Contractors (PMCs) has introduced a new but worrisome dimension to maritime security concerns in the GoG. With the dearth or outright lack of effective state presence on the seas, for-profit PMCs have made progress in terms of pushing for a greater share of shipping lanes in the region. Due to the fact that their presence raises critical legitimacy and regulatory questions, there is at the same time controversy on whether or not to engage PMCs in addressing maritime security challenges. Whereas they are routinely engaged for similar purposes in places like the Indian Ocean without much controversy. PMCs are widely viewed with caution and suspicion in the GoG. In addition to this problem are the security implications of the frequent-but still largely unauthorized-use of military or naval patrols either to safeguard oil facilities in deep waters or to escort ships in passage or those in distress, through the GoG waters.
5. **Poorly Defined Maritime Boundaries:** Mostly due to their colonial legacies, African land borders have notoriously been poorly demarcated in a manner that allows for unfettered and undocumented movement of



goods and people. The maritime boundaries are even more problematic because of the very nature of waters especially the overlapping jurisdiction (or contested territories) associated with them. Examples of maritime disputes in the GoG include “those between Nigeria and Cameroon over the Bakassi Peninsula; Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon over an island at the mouth of the Ntem River; Gabon and Equatorial Guinea over the Mbane Island and Corisco Bay boundaries; and the festering one between Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire over the segments of their oil-rich waters “ (Ukeje, 2010:157). The early decision to respect colonial borders by African states at independence based on the principle of *uti possidetis* has minimized the risk of conflict. *Uti Possidetis* (Latin for “as you possess”) is a principle in international law that territory and other property remains with its remains with its possessor at the end of a conflict unless otherwise provided for by treaty; if such a treaty does not include conditions regarding the possession of property and territory taken during the war then the principle of *uti possidetis* will prevail. (Ukeje and Mvomo Ela, 2013:18). There has been a number of violent broader confrontations in the last few decades. With advanced technology now aiding the discovery of hydrocarbon deposits along the GoG coastline and in the deep waters of the region, the potential for maritime boarder disputes has grown. If such disputes linger, there is the likelihood that they may trigger new conflicts, exacerbate existing ones erode whatever little efforts have been made to promote effective regional response to maritime insecurity in the region. Other factors are the social injustices associated with perverse resource extraction, poverty and economic marginalization, poor legal framework and related capacity deficit for implementation, the political dynamics in west Africa, over-militarization of the region from without, and the inordinate quest for re-assertion of sovereignty on the part of many GoG countries.

### **Overview of Actions Already Taken**

In the face of the fact that the very factors that often give rise to or that stoke the incidence of maritime insecurity in the GoG arise from the domestic (national), regional, continental, and global sources, attempts at mitigating these challenges have toed the lines of understanding, mobilizing and harmonizing actions at these four levels. We briefly examine these actions below.

#### **1. Domestic (national) Level Priorities**

The point had been made earlier that GoG countries are generally weak in their capacity to exercise effective control over their coastal and deep offshore territories. This is particularly pronounced in the maritime domain give the sheer expanse of coastal waters to cover and the limitations of their mostly small and poorly equipped national navies that must combat sometimes better resourced and ruthless criminal groups. The situation is compounded by internal policy instability which frequently provides a growing number of non-state groups with the basis to engage in criminal and violent actions. An obvious but by no means isolated example is the oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria which as the International Crisis Group (ICG) recently notes, has been the initial epicentre of maritime crime where, for decades, oil production created a ‘paradox of plenty’ in which the abundance of wealth has woefully failed to translate into meaningful and sustainable development (ICG, 2012) instead, oil extraction has left in its wake a reckless plundering of riches and the deepening of the country’s developmental crisis. As social tensions and environmental pollution increased, oil incomes have mostly benefited the central government and oil companies, and greased the pocket of local political, business and traditional elite. Those excluded from the sleazy and largely opaque reward systems often take recourse to violence against the state either as a way for expressing their powerlessness or to gain a foothold in the network of corrupt distribution of oil wealth. Forced to bypass the state to gain access to even a fraction of this wealth, the excluded have organized illegal activities, including the stealing of crude oil, establishment of clandestine cottage refineries as well as ‘black market’ trade in petroleum resources. The current increase in the value of the illegal segment of that industry, which is notoriously evident in official figures which state that more than 15% of oil production is lost of oil theft or bunkering, has allowed economic crime to blossom in Nigeria (Okonmah, 2007: 58).

Furthermore, except perhaps in Angola where the Cabinda separatist group has been involved in a long-drawn fight against the central government in Luanda, no other GoG country faces such acute and persistent challenge to its authority by armed groups who make competing claims on national sovereignty. Other countries in the region also have major internal security (and stability) challenges which make it difficult for them to focus on ‘distant’ maritime security issues until the threats become costlier. In recent times, for example, Cote d’Ivoire has seen increased threats to maritime security along the country’s water since the disputed 2010 elections. The threat is also growing in a relatively more stable country like Ghana while Togo and Benin witnessed occasional breaches in maritime security during periods of national uncertainty related to political transitions and deepening economic crisis. Without exceptions these countries have at different time all had to come to terms with how ignorance and/or lack of quick-impact response to maritime security challenges could undermine fiscal survival and threaten domestic security and stability. The intractability of maritime security challenges in the region is magnified by what might be described as a long history of ‘policy blindness’

towards coastal waters; both as a focus of security as well as that of sustainable development planning. In the report about drugs and transnational crime in West Africa cited earlier, UNODC rightly noted that “state institutions and the rule of law are weak in most of these countries, and unless these organized crimes are tackled, instability is likely to persist and increase”. (UNODC, 2013: 354).

## **2. Regional Level Actions**

Since the GoG waters became a prominent site of maritime threat, countries within the zone have begun to mobilize themselves to ameliorate or avert the risk. However, there have been visible regional disparities between West and central Africa in terms of the amount of attention and steps so far taken.

Initiatives by countries in the economic community of Central African States (ECCAS) have proceeded faster than those of their counterparts in the ECOWAS region, even if there is a bright prospect of inter-regional collaboration between the two in the near future. In comparative terms, ECCAS has a relatively more advanced and robust maritime security agenda and programme than its West African counterparts. Began more comprehensively in 2009, the *ECCAS maritime initiative is institutionalized through the Regional Coordination Centre for the Maritime security of Central African (CRESMAC) in Pointe-Noire, the Congo. The centre is responsible for aggregating the various military and civilian capacities of member states and leveraging on these to create an integrated maritime security strategy which would be capable of effectively responding to emerging challenges.* ECCAS’s strategy also fits into the broader continental view primarily because it promotes information sharing and management joint patrol and surveillance of maritime space, the harmonization of actions at sea, the introduction of a regional maritime tax regime, the acquisition of equipment for joint use and the institutionalization of a periodic maritime conference (Ukeje, 2011).

For operational purposes, the ECCAS maritime security strategy divides the vast Central African segment of the GoG into three zones (A, B and D) stretching all the way from Angola to the maritime borders of Nigeria and Cameroon. The most vulnerable, and paradoxically most vibrant, is Zone D which covers Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe. One of the strong points for the ECCAS model is that it has created a coordinating centre in Douala, Cameroun, which also serves as regional hub for anti-piracy activities. In spite of this headway, a major constraint is that there is still very limited capacity within ECCAS to respond to growing maritime security challenges. This factor from time to time forces member countries of the organization to solicit for and rely almost exclusively on foreign military/naval assistance, indeed, it was partly to remedy this gap that ECCA created, in May 2009, an inventory of naval assets and joint patrols capable of assisting weaker navies within the region aimed at pooling their resources in increasingly effective and efficient ways.

ECOWAS, on the other hand, has only slowly started to *grasp the realities and full implications of the maritime dimensions of its regional security architecture that had for long been dominated by an overwhelming fixation with security on land.* Even though it is a more developed regional economic community compared with the other four on the continent, what now forms the kernel of its maritime strategy was only first discussed by the Committee of Chiefs of Defense staff (CCDS) at a meeting in Cotonou, in April 2010. Perhaps one of the reasons for this lag was the initial widespread perception that the region’s maritime challenges were largely a Nigerian problem, mostly stoked by long-drawn insurgency activities in the Niger Delta. The result of this narrow outlook is that maritime security issues have either been kept out of the regional agenda or, at best, discussed in genera (and aspirational) terms (Ukeje and Mvomo Ela, 2013). Against the backdrop of rising incidences of piracy and other form of violent attacks beyond the immediate vicinity of the Nigerian coastline into Togolese, Beninnoise and even Ghana waters, ECOWAS was left with no choice than to begin serious contemplation around the regional dimensions of maritime security threats. Apart from adopting much of the ECCAS model, in principle, ECOWAS has signified the urgency of the need for greater commitment towards information sharing, asset coordination and integration. In 2012, the Community created Zone E as its first operational zone, involving Nigeria, Niger, Benin and Togo. It is instructive that this new operational zone is directly adjacent to ECCAS’ Zone D; together they constitute the choke point of piracy and other criminal activities along the GoG waters. Like the ECCAS model, ECOWAS envisages that member states in the designated zones will coordinate their maritime activities, share information and generally pool resources. (FES, 2011: 242).

**3. International Level Actions:** At the global level, the United Nations Organization (UNO), international agencies such as the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), countries like the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), France, China, the European Union (EU), and the African Union (AU), among others have at one time or the other taken diverse actions aimed at mitigating the maritime security challenges of the GoG. International concern about growing maritime insecurity in the GoG is best showcased by the adoption, within a space of four months, of two major United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions: 2018 (October, 2011) and 2039 (February, 2012) both calling for greater regional action in

response to the growing menace of piracy. From the two resolutions, as well as several other international instruments and initiatives, it is easy to distil what the narrow priorities of the international community are vis-à-vis maritime security in the GoG. It is also apparent that such priorities might not sufficiently dovetail with those of the countries and local communities within the region. In no particular order, the priorities of the international community have been how to: effectively tackle threats to global energy security, allow unhindered maritime trade, pursue the global war on terror, and choke the flow of *illicit trafficking of human beings, drugs and firearms*. For these concerns, global powers that also drive the agenda on maritime security in the GoG and throughout Africa are keen to consider and *rely on military action than to engage in soft intervention which targets human security and human development as sustainable solutions to maritime security challenges*. (Ukeje and Mvomo Ela, 2013).

To them, also, the key elements of maritime safety and security differ quantitatively as they focus more on countering violent extremism, weapons of energy security, and prompt responsiveness to deadly contagion. These priorities, important as they might seem, are not only overly top-down in approach but completely disconnected from the urgent priorities facing governments or even ordinary communities in the GoG relating to governance, livelihoods and security broadly defined to include state and human security. In other words, while the concerns of the international community are mainly on the safety of maritime shipping and, by extension, global energy supplies, they are mostly at variance with the goals of coastal communities who often see in their supposedly illegal activities, a legitimate means of coping with the burdens imposed by governance deficits. (Balde, 2012).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, effort have seen made in this paper to highlight the economic importance of the GoG to include its rich and abundant hydrocarbon, marine, and rainforest resources represented by huge deposits of oil and gas, fish and other aquatic resources, and timber. The foregoing succinctly explains the decades of so much attention by so many economic and criminal actors from within and without that has been focused on the region, all engaged in the intense legitimate and illegal exploitation and distribution of the said resources.

The point is that myriad of factors that emanate from diverse sources have conspiratorially fed into the said inordinate struggle for the resources to transform the region into one hotbed of festering crime and criminalities akin to those of the Gulf of Arden and Straits of Malaca. In addition to their different minor dimensions, the acts of criminality in the region have reared their ugly heads typically in the form of piracy, armed robbery, IUU fishing, kidnap-and-ransom, and trafficking in human beings, drugs and firearms.

In response to the foregoing rising incidence of insecurity in the region, actions have since been taken at the domestic (national), regional, continental, and global levels by countries, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the leading global bodies such as the UN, AU, INTERPOL, EU, ECCAS, ECOWAS, MOWCA and GGC, and countries like the US, the UK, France and China in fighting the menace of insecurity in the GoG. The point also is that in spite of the efforts by the said bodies and countries, the menace of maritime insecurity in the region has remained unabated.

#### V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the fact that the factors that trigger high incidence of maritime insecurity in the GoG emanate from diverse sources, namely, domestic (national), regional, continental and international levels, the lasting solutions can only be found by understanding, mobilizing and harmonising actions at the different levels. The challenge is to implement interventions that are integrated and holistic, rather than those in which actors at the different levels pursue disconnected and divergent measures capable of undermining effective solutions in the short, medium and long term (Ukeje and Mvomo Ela, 2013).

- 1) **Intelligence-Led Law Enforcement:** Authorities that set and operate good order at sea agenda in the GoG should learn to first and foremost purge themselves of the preconceived and erroneous notion that the lasting solution to the incidence of maritime insecurity in the region lies in sheer military option based on the violence-for-violence model. Such methodology is a worn-out one that has proved most ineffective and has yielded its place to the modern proactive approach known as intelligence – led law enforcement by use of those that have gotten the capacities, training and experience for it. Think of it, Yaro Gottlieb, senior counsel at INTERPOL, had suggested that a more holistic approach must be taken to combat piracy from a law-enforcement perspective. He agreed that piracy was a symptom and there needed to be a corresponding land-based solution as well as securing the maritime domain (Gottlieb, 2013). Even the idea of deploying or relying on naval forces or coastguards made up of mainly military personnel is also inappropriate. This is because of the fact that they are not law-enforcement forces and, therefore, lack the necessary institutional knowledge for evidence gathering and investigations. For, there are instances whereby vital information could be withheld on grounds that such information is classified. This being the case, in place of the use of

military forces that comprise mostly naval officers, airforce personnel, and soldiers, emphasis should be on highly trained police officers well versed in intelligence-led policing.

- 2) **Building Strong Partnership and Co-ordination:** The solution to maritime insecurity in the region lies in building partner capacities to deal with crimes at sea as law-enforcement challenges, rather than expanding regional naval forces or deploying Western naval forces to fill a perceived security void. This involved strengthening the laws and the legal systems of West African states, training their law-enforcement authorities (whether coastguards, navies or some other units) in the conduct of maritime law-enforcement operations such as ship boarding and searches, and working with the African Union. And the sub-regional organizations such as ECCAS and ECOWAS to promote both African leadership and regional cooperation in the area of maritime safety and security. The role of the international community was to support African capacity by advising, training and equipping local security forces and by promoting regional and international coordination.
- 3) **Coordination for Sharing of Information, Data, Strategies and Equipment:** The solution requires coordinated action, both at the national and local level inside Nigeria, and at a regional and international level outside. It requires detection and the collection of evidence, military or police intervention, arrests and effective judicial action. It also depended on transparency and the publicizing of punishment to act as a deterrent.

A necessary first step in this regard would be to put in place a robust mechanism for asset mapping, gathering and sharing of information and data, coordination of regional efforts on law enforcement, joint patrol by national navies, to name a few. The coordination here should include exchange of information among both regional states and their maritime centres; interoperability of naval responses; and the need for a comprehensive response incorporating land-based issues such as governance and the justice sector. Co-operation in this regard should involve four main types of actors: navy and coastguard, police, judiciary, and private industry- that are not used to coordinated action, as was also the initial experience in Somalia (Ibn Chambers, 2015).

Another critical step here should involve drafting at the international level comprehensive maritime agreements, which effectively establish regional maritime zones under ECCAS and ECOWAS. This regional approach makes maritime safety and security a shared responsibility. Together the member states are now conducting cross-border patrols, sharing law-enforcement intelligence, establishing and maintaining joint coordination centres and implementing a regional strategy. The US naval component of AFRICOM has been conducting exercises such as Obangame and Saharan Express to reinforce these draft operational agreements and help breathe life into them. In order for such a strategy to work, a number of measures would need to be implemented. Sub-regional centres could be designated as well as a regional coordinating centre, building on the work and facilities of ECCAS. More emphasis is needed on information and intelligence-sharing and capacity, with a further need for systematic coordination in counter-piracy operations among countries of the region, through establishment of a common coordinating centre for maritime security and common database.

- 4) **Greater Reliance on Use of Advanced Technology and Hardware:** As a consequence of their parent countries capacity deficits, most of the security agencies such as the navy, coastguards, and the police lack those state of the art technologies such as information and communications gadgets and hardware including ICT networks, satellite technology, helicopters, speedboats, cameras, sensors, etc that are badly needed for surveillance, investigation, arrest and prosecution. To this extent, rich countries, corporate entities and international bodies should lend their support and assistance in this direction to enable the various national, regional, and security structures that operate in the GoG not only to acquire the said advanced technologies and hardware, but also to employ more personnel, training and technical assistance. Shell, for instance, has started lacing its crude oil with unique synthetic tracers, thereby enabling identification of any stolen oil at the point of purchase when it re-enters the legitimate market.
- 5) **Taking Ownership on the Part of Africans:** There is the need for GoG countries, the national and regional levels, to take the initiative in setting new national agenda and priorities on maritime security issues in response to recent challenges, instead of deploying old methodologies that have proved ineffective. The implication of not acting promptly and decisively is that they risk external actors hijacking and setting the agenda. It is therefore important to insist on an African agency and voice in setting priorities. Of course, the international community will continue to play a key role, but one that is sensitive to national and regional priorities.
- 6) **Strengthening Existing Laws and Domestication of International Protocols and Instruments:** There is also the need to strengthen existing national laws and create new ones, as well as to design regional codes on maritime security and development issues. Even where they exist such laws tend to be too weak to serve as deterrence on punishment. The definition of what constitutes piracy, for instance, is either too weak or

outdated especially when it is treated like armed robbery, murder or conspiracy. It is also important to domesticate international laws and des on safety and security at sea.

- 7) **Eradication of the Root Causes of Illicit Acts at Sea:** In drawing up a strategy, regional stakeholders must not lose sight of the importance of eradicating root causes that lead to the proliferation of illicit activities at sea. As it was widely acknowledged that ‘efforts to combat piracy start on land; serious efforts to combat corruption were crucial: first, to prevent the loss of public money that could be used to address youth unemployment and poverty, and overall to strengthen state institutions and the rule of law; and secondly to tackle criminal networks ‘on land’ that were widely acknowledged to be closely linked to acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea.
- 8) **Greater Partnership with the Local Population:** It goes without saying that owing to one reason or the other, most law enforcement agencies and the military are never on friendly terms with members of the public which in most cases finds expression in wide spread mutual mistrust and lack of confidence on the part of both parties. The consequence of the foregoing is the tendency on the part of the members of the public to withhold vital information that would have been of much assistance in tracking crimes and the culprits behind such. To facilitate the task of intelligence-gathering aspect of the law enforcement strategy for tackling maritime insecurity in the GoG, security structures in the region should place emphasis on fraternizing more with the local community members and private maritime security companies (PMSCs) or private security contractors (PSCs) for purpose of breaking the present barrier represented by palpable mistrust and crisis of confidence that tend to block information flow.

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