

Piracy and high seas crime growing, becoming more sophisticated, UN Security Council told

“Two-thirds of the world’s surface is ocean. Nearly all of that is beyond any State’s territorial waters and largely not subject to a single state criminal jurisdiction,” Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the [UN Office on Drugs and Crime](#) (UNODC) [said as he briefed](#) the Council’s [first-ever debate](#) targeting the [global challenge of transnational maritime crime](#).

Speaking via video conference from UNODC headquarters in Vienna, he spotlighted the root causes of transnational organized crime at sea and the linkages between terrorism, piracy and illegal trafficking.

“The high seas are open for vessels of all countries, both coastal and landlocked, to support international trade and economic cooperation, contact among peoples and the responsible use of natural resources” he maintained. “However, in recent years the freedom of navigation is being exploited by criminal groups.”

“Maritime crime by its nature involves vessels, cargoes, crews, victims and illicit money flows from many regions”, he explained, adding that UNODC’s counter-piracy programme grew from its success [off the coast of Somalia](#), which has been plagued by high-seas crimes such as piracy, robbery and smuggling.

UNODC [continues to support](#) trials in Kenya and Seychelles, as well as the humane and secure imprisonment of convicted pirates and has completed the first phase of the Mogadishu Prison and Court Complex, which will be handed over to the Somali Government shortly.

He said that through public/private cooperation, UNODC has made advancements through the Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime, which coordinates the response to heroin and charcoal smuggling that is funding terrorist groups and the Contact Group on Maritime Crime in the Sulu and Celebes Sea.

The agency also supports inter-regional cooperation against criminal activities at sea; is working to secure the container trade supply chain; and is combatting terrorism, human trafficking and migrant smuggling, wildlife and fisheries crime, firearms trafficking and emerging crimes.

“All our work at sea, where jurisdiction is complex – crime is often committed unseen and enforcement is difficult – builds on UNODC’s long experience and research expertise in addressing all forms of organized crime, terrorism and corruption”, stated the UNODC chief.

Mr. Fedotov emphasized the importance that countries ratify and implementing international commitments, including [UN Convention against Transnational](#)

[Organized Crime](#) and its protocols, and provide technical assistance.

High seas criminality 'a threat to Gulf of Guinea and the world'

For his part, Simeon Oyono Esono Angue, Foreign Minister of Equatorial Guinea, which presides over the Council for the month of February, pointed out that in the last decade, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea accounted for 30 per cent of attacks in African waters.

"What is happening in the Gulf of Guinea is important for all of us here", he spelled out.

Although a security threat, the Gulf also provides the resources that sustain Equatorial Guinea's economy.

"This area is of vital importance for my country's subsistence", he argued, asking "the African Union Commission, the United Nations and strategic partners represented in this room" to support efforts to ensure peace and marine security, the fight against terrorism and piracy, and the sustainable development of the countries in the region.

Speaking via teleconference from the capital of Angola, Luanda, Florentina Adenike Ukonga, Executive Secretary, Gulf of Guinea Commission, also briefed the Council and focused on crime in the region "as a threat to world peace and security".

Comprised of countries from Liberia to Angola, the Gulf of Guinea area encompasses a 6,000 km coastline, which Ms. Ukonga called "a wide expanse of water that no country in the region can successfully patrol".

However, she did make some recommendations, saying: "Transnational organized crime at sea in the Gulf of Guinea region can be reduced with a better and more coordinated intervention at national, regional and international levels,".

UNODC support to countries in countering maritime crime:

- attacks on shipping in the Gulf of Aden.
- cocaine trafficking in the Atlantic.
- heroin trafficking in the Indian Ocean.
- piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea.
- kidnap for ransom in the Sulu and Celebes Seas.
- illegal fishing in the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific oceans.
- migrant smuggling in the Mediterranean and Gulf of Aden