United Nations Security Council Open Arria Formula Meeting

“Maritime Crime as a Threat to International Peace and Security”

13 June 2018
15:00 – 18:00
Venue: UNHQ – Room S-1522 (15th Floor)

Hosted by the Permanent Missions of Equatorial Guinea, Cote d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, the Netherlands and the United States to the UN with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

High Level Segment:

- H.E. Ambassador Mr. Anatolio Ndong Mba, Permanent Representative of the Equatorial Guinea to the United Nations;

- H.E. Ambassador Mrs. Nikki Haley, Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations;

- H.E. Ambassador Mr. Karel J.G. van Oosterom, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations;

- H.E. Ambassador Mr. Tekeda Alemu, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations;


High Level Panel:

- H.E. Minister Hon. Sagala Ratnayaka, Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister and Minister of Youth Affairs & Southern Development, Sri Lanka;

- Mr. Enrico Credendino, Rear Admiral (UH) and Commander of the EU Naval Force Med Operation Sophia;

- Mrs. Hajara Yusuf, Nigerian Public Prosecutor, Federal Ministry of Justice;

- Mr. Alan Cole, Head of the UNODC Global Maritime Crime Programme.
Background information:

Maritime crime and trafficking at sea, in particular piracy and armed robbery, arms and drug trafficking, fisheries crime, smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons, are increasingly recognized as being among the most serious threats to our security and global economy. On 17 November 2017, the Security Council held a meeting under the Presidency of Italy to address security challenges in the Mediterranean and identify solutions to issues of global implications. On that occasion, the UN Secretary General noted that “the Mediterranean faces serious challenges on multiple fronts: the illicit trade in narcotics, weapons and petroleum products; large movements of refugees and migrants, who are preyed upon by human smugglers and traffickers; and maritime piracy. The narcotics trade is also generating deadly spillover effects, such as increased drug use and health crises”.

In the past few years the SC has also consistently adopted resolutions to address piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Guinea, including in the most recent resolutions 2383 (2017) and 2316 (2016) and PRST 2016/4, respectively. Notwithstanding the Council recently acknowledged that the number of recorded incidents have reduced, Member States noted that piracy and other illicit and illegal activities off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Guinea still constitute a source of major concern in those areas, as well as a persistent threat to international peace and security.

The Gulf of Guinea has become a major hub for maritime criminality and piracy and has over the recent years experienced an escalation of piracy and armed robbery at sea incidents. Deterring piracy in West Africa remains a significant and persistent cost to both regional and international stakeholders, and 2016 saw a 57% rise in the number of seafarers affected by piracy in West Africa. The lack of prosecutions related to incidents of piracy and armed robbery at sea continues to undermine efforts to combat piracy. For most countries in West Africa, limited maritime capacities remain a challenge for law enforcement agencies. The absence of robust domestic legal frameworks, the insufficient effectiveness of domestic justice systems, and other factors inhibit the legal finish of prosecutions related to criminal activities at sea.

In addition to the more traditional Afghan opiate trafficking through the so-called “northern” or Balkan routes, criminal networks are increasingly moving heroin through the “southern” maritime route to Africa, and then overland to markets in Europe and elsewhere. Incidents of heroin trafficking have arisen because land-based routes are more easily suppressed by law enforcement and cooperation between States in relation to policing land borders. The maritime drug interdiction system is fragile given that trafficking of drugs by sea is complex, pervasive and global. Drug trafficking is a serious challenge to Africa and is taking place against a backdrop of real economic growth and development in parts of the continent. For Africa, the significance of this shift is potentially substantial, since the continent as a whole has a limited capacity to respond to a potential upsurge in heroin trafficking.

Finally, major Caribbean islands are witnessing increased drug activity as these routes shift back into the region. Haiti, for instance, has become a destination for traffickers moving drugs through the region due to instability in Central America from criminal groups coupled with increased enforcement. North America is not a primary consumer of Afghan heroin, but, as reported by UNODC, it can provide a lucrative niche for some trafficking groups, in particular in Canada where most heroin seized originates from Afghanistan. In addition, estimates suggested that 76% of cocaine departing South America transited the eastern Pacific in 2015, often by ship or semi-submersible vessel, entering Central America before being transported overland to the United States.
Due to the unique nature of the high seas - falling outside the jurisdiction of any single State, but within the collective responsibility of all - a coordinated and comprehensive approach must be taken to tackle crimes both occurring at sea and being carried out through use of the maritime domain. This includes interrupting criminal activities at sea, buttressing the legal frameworks governing domestic maritime crimes, strengthening domestic maritime law-enforcement capacity and internal coordination, addressing the root causes of maritime crime on land, and working with the private sector and civil society to address maritime crime. UNODC, through its Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP), assists states to strengthen their capacity to combat maritime crime.

**Purpose of the Meeting**

The meeting will provide a platform for Member States to address the common and interlinked emerging crimes at sea, including piracy and armed robbery, arms and drug trafficking, fisheries crime, smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons. It will also provide Member States with an opportunity to identify relevant good practices and challenges in international cooperation at the legal and operational levels with respect to crimes at sea. In their interventions, Member States may wish to address the ways that the international community could strengthen prevention mechanisms and responses to counter maritime crime as follows:

- Address root causes that fuel maritime crime and to discuss how preventing and countering maritime crime would benefit efforts aimed at preventing conflicts and sustaining peace in post conflict contexts.
- Consider the relevance of assessing threats and emerging crimes and enhancing data collection, research and analysis to strengthen evidence based responses for crime prevention policies, conflict analysis and political strategies.
- Consider improving international and regional cooperation and building capacities of authorities to prevent, investigate and prosecute maritime crime.
- Identify gaps in the underlying legal frameworks governing domestic maritime crimes.
- Address the need for regular coordination meetings and joint operations which may be suggested to improve strategic and operational interagency coordination, as is the empowerment of central designated authorities to address maritime crime.
- Consider the role of the private sector, civil society, or other non-state entities in addressing maritime crime.

**Format/Scenario:**

The Arria Formula Meeting will be open to all UN Member States and accredited civil society. The event will consist of a High-Level Segment and Panel, followed by interventions by Security Council members. UN Member States and accredited civil society may deliver brief remarks time permitting. The event will be conducted in English only (interpretation services are not available). For any information and RSVP, please contact Mr. Victor Manuel Ele Ela (Counselor/Political Coordinator, Permanent Mission of Equatorial Guinea to the United Nations) at eleela@equatorialguineaun.org.