Federal Foreign Office

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Concept Note

African Maritime Governance Forum

Advancing Maritime Security through the Yaoundé Architecture, the Djibouti Code of Conduct and Inclusive Maritime Governance

Organisers: The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), with support from the German Federal Foreign Office.

Location: Dakar, Senegal

Date: 14-15 December 2026

BACKGROUND

Building on previous African Maritime Governance Conferences, particularly the 2025 Maritime Security Conference in Accra, the 2026 Forum will focus on translating political dialogue into practical implementation. It will take stock of progress on the Accra recommendations, identify outstanding challenges and agree on a limited number of regional priorities. Particular attention will be given to the ongoing review of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct (YCoC), within the wider Yaoundé Architecture (YA), and to practical cooperation with the Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC), while respecting the distinct mandates and ownership of both regional frameworks.

Africa's maritime domain underpins trade, regional integration, coastal livelihoods and sustainable blue economy development. Across the Gulf of Guinea, the Red Sea and the Western Indian Ocean, evolving security risks also affect critical maritime infrastructure, including ports, subsea communications cables, offshore energy installations, pipelines and strategically important shipping routes. Physical, cyber and hybrid threats require coordinated approaches to risk assessment, maritime surveillance, preparedness and resilience, alongside sound governance and environmental stewardship.

The complementary strengths of the YA and the DCoC provide a unique opportunity to strengthen cooperation between Africa's regional maritime governance frameworks while fully respecting their respective mandates and regional ownership. By facilitating the exchange of experiences, innovative approaches and practical lessons learned between the Gulf of Guinea and the Western Indian Ocean, the Forum will contribute to strengthening institutional cooperation, enhancing Maritime Domain Awareness ('MDA') and maritime surveillance capabilities, strengthening the protection of critical maritime infrastructure, promoting legal and policy coherence, and supporting sustainable capacity development. In doing so, it will contribute to the implementation of the African Union's Agenda 2063, the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (2050 AIM Strategy) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals ('SDGs').

Recognising that maritime governance extends well beyond the maritime security sector, the Forum brings together governments, regional organisations, maritime administrations, port authorities, academia, civil society, the private sector, development partners and coastal communities. By adopting this whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, the Forum creates a platform for dialogue across institutional and sectoral boundaries to jointly advance Africa's maritime governance agenda, foster innovative partnerships and strengthen regional ownership.

The Forum is an implementation-oriented platform rather than a broad survey of maritime security issues. It will connect regional policy priorities with operational experience and targeted partnerships, with a view to producing a short, actionable set of follow-up measures.

OBJECTIVES

1. Advance Harmonisation of Regional Maritime Cooperation

Support African-led cooperation within the Yaoundé Architecture and the DCoC, with particular attention to the ongoing review of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct. Encourage exchange of practical lessons and policy coherence while respecting the distinct regional mandates and decision-making processes.

2. Strengthen Digital Innovation and Maritime Surveillance

Promote interoperable Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), satellite-enabled and coastal monitoring, vessel tracking, timely alerts and responsible information sharing. Discussions will consider how existing national and regional centres can better support evidence-based decisions, early warning and coordination while respecting sovereignty and established mandates.

3. Promote Maritime Resilience, Infrastructure Protection and Sustainability

Strengthen the protection and resilience of critical maritime infrastructure—including ports, subsea cables, offshore energy facilities and pipelines—and the safety of strategic shipping routes. Focus on risk assessment, cybersecurity, public-private information exchange, incident reporting, preparedness and coordinated responses to physical, cyber and hybrid threats, using existing national and regional mechanisms.

4. Foster Inclusive Partnerships and African Ownership

Promote whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches by strengthening cooperation among governments, regional organisations, academia, the private sector, civil

society, youth and women's networks, coastal communities and development partners. Encourage knowledge exchange, innovation and long-term partnerships that reinforce African ownership and regional cooperation.

5. Integrate Blue Economy Sustainability and Inclusion

Integrate sustainable blue economy development, environmental stewardship, resilient coastal communities and inclusive participation across the Forum's discussions, consistent with Agenda 2063, the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

FOCUS AREAS AND CONTENT

The Forum will be organised around three connected priorities: (i) African-led maritime governance and regional cooperation, including the review of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct and engagement with the DCoC; (ii) MDA and protection of critical maritime infrastructure; and (iii) partnerships and practical implementation. Blue economy resilience, sustainability and inclusive participation will inform each priority rather than form separate competing conference tracks.

Discussions will examine how maritime administrations, coast guards, navies, regional information-sharing centres and private operators can cooperate on surveillance, early warning and response. Particular attention will be given to subsea communications cables, offshore energy installations and pipelines, ports and strategic shipping routes, including the contribution of satellite-based monitoring and secure information exchange. Participants will identify realistic actions that build on existing regional arrangements, rather than establish parallel structures.

FORMAT

- Day 1 – High-Level Leadership and Regional Governance Dialogue: Ministers, senior officials and regional institutions will take stock of the Accra recommendations, exchange perspectives relevant to the ongoing review of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct and identify practical cooperation opportunities with the DCoC. The review remains under the leadership and decision-making authority of the relevant African institutions; the Forum will not seek to endorse or adopt revisions.
- Day 2 (morning) – MDA and Critical Maritime Infrastructure Dialogue: A focused exchange among maritime authorities, regional centres and industry on surveillance, information sharing, subsea cables, pipelines, offshore installations, ports and shipping routes, including physical, cyber and hybrid risks.

- Day 2 (afternoon) – Implementation Policy Lab: A facilitated working session will translate the preceding dialogues into up to three practical priority actions, with proposed regional leads, supporting partners, indicative next steps and realistic follow-up through existing mechanisms. Outputs will be recommendations for consideration by the competent institutions, not binding commitments.

  Cross-Cutting Knowledge Exchange: Short, targeted examples of satellite-enabled MDA, regional coordination and public-private incident reporting will inform the dialogues and policy lab; these are integrated contributions, not additional parallel sessions.
- Targeted Partnership Exchange: Infrastructure operators, regional institutions, development partners and technical experts will identify feasible cooperation opportunities within the scheduled dialogues and policy lab, without adding a separate conference track.
- Closing and Follow-Up: Regional stakeholders will review the proposed priorities, identify responsible institutions and agree on a realistic process for taking the recommendations forward.
- The two-day programme will prioritise substantive dialogue and decision-oriented working sessions over numerous separate panels.

PARTNERSHIP FORUMS AND PARTICIPANTS

Participants will be selected to support the three substantive priorities and the implementation-focused discussion, drawing from:

- National Governments, Ministries and Maritime Administrations
- Regional Economic Communities (ECCAS, ECOWAS, IGAD and EAC), the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC), Maritime Coordination Centres and Regional Maritime Mechanisms
- International Organisations, Development Partners, Donors and International Financial Institutions
- Port Authorities, Harbour Administrations, Maritime Agencies and Regulatory Bodies
- Navies, Coast Guards, Law Enforcement Agencies and other Maritime Security Institutions
- Universities, Research Institutions, Maritime Training Centres and Think Tanks
- Private Sector Representatives, Shipping and Logistics Companies, Port Operators, Technology Providers, Subsea Cable Operators, Offshore Energy and Pipeline Operators, Maritime Insurers, Infrastructure Resilience Specialists and Blue Economy Industries

- Civil Society Organisations, NGOs, Women's Networks, Youth Organisations, Fishing Communities and other Coastal Stakeholders

Participation by infrastructure operators and relevant maritime security authorities will support practical exchanges on risk assessment, early warning, incident reporting and response coordination. Engagement will be integrated into the main dialogues rather than organised as additional parallel sessions.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The Forum is expected to deliver:

- Shared priorities for cooperation between the YA and DCoC, respecting their distinct mandates and African regional ownership, including lessons relevant to the review of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct.
- A concise set of practical recommendations on MDA and critical maritime infrastructure resilience, including risk assessment, early warning, public-private information sharing and coordinated incident response.
- Targeted partnerships among regional organisations, maritime authorities, infrastructure operators, technical experts and development partners, linked to identified implementation needs.
- Stronger African leadership and cross-regional exchange, with inclusive participation integrated into the proposed follow-up actions.
- A prioritised shortlist of feasible capacity-development and technical-assistance opportunities, including satellite-enabled MDA and infrastructure resilience.

A concise, regionally owned follow-up matrix with up to three proposed priority actions, potential lead institutions, supporting partners and indicative next steps, subject to consideration through existing regional decision-making processes.

- A clear pathway to review progress on agreed priorities through existing regional frameworks, contributing to Agenda 2063 and the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy.

The Forum will provide a focused opportunity for African institutions and partners to move from dialogue to practical cooperation. Its success will be measured by the relevance, ownership and feasibility of the priorities agreed—not by the number of topics covered.