AFRICA CENTER
FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES
IMPACT THROUGH INSIGHT

25 YEARS

YAOUNDE CODE OF CONDUCT MARITIME ZONES A & D WORKSHOP

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LUANDA, ANGOLA | DECEMBER 10-13, 2024

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS) convened a four-day workshop to assess progress towards the full operationalization of maritime zones A and D that are part of the Yaoundé Architecture (YA). A total of 45 uniformed and civilian participants from six countries (Angola, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Republic of Congo, and São Tomé and Príncipe) and representatives from the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centers (MMCCs) for Zones A and D, the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa (CRESMAC), the Interregional Coordination Centre (ICC) as well as international organizations attended the roundtable. Participants considered a set of challenges related to the implementation of the YA, including the development and implementation of national maritime security strategies, the operationalization of each country's Maritime Operations Centers (MOCs) as well as the coordination of maritime security operations and information sharing across national, zonal, regional, and interregional levels.

This document provides a summary of key insights from the workshop and recommendations offered by the participants.

OVERVIEW OF YAOUNDÉ ARCHITECTURE (YA)

The YA provides a comprehensive framework for coordinated actions at different levels in the maritime space of the Gulf of Guinea – a region plagued by piracy, illegal fishing, smuggling, and other forms of maritime crime. The YA outlines five[1] levels of coordination: political, strategic, regional, zonal, and national (see figure 1 below).

The political level of the structure is occupied by two Regional Economic Communities (RECs): Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The Interregional Coordination Centre (ICC)[2], with its headquarters in Yaoundé, plays a crucial strategic coordination role between the two RECs within the

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[1] The political, strategical, regional, zonal, and national levels. The political and strategic levels have different competencies in the YA framework.
[2] Interregional Coordination Centre (2022). Yaoundé architecture.

framework of the YA, and therefore occupies the strategic level of the architecture[3]. The regional level includes the two Regional Maritime Centers: the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa (CRESMAC), based in Pointe-Noire (Republic of Congo), and the Regional Centre for Maritime Security of West Africa (CRESMAO), based in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire). The two RECs are mandated to provide political oversight to CRESMAC and CRESMAO. The zonal level comprises five Multinational Maritime Coordination Centers (MMCCs) that are coordinated by CRESMAC and CRESMAO. The focus of this workshop are the MMCCs in Zones A and D, which fall under CRESMAC

At the national level there are Maritime Operations Centers (MOCs) established primarily to coordinate state action at sea across maritime stakeholders.[4] By promoting collaboration across these levels, the YA aims to strengthen maritime security and foster sustainable development in this region.

Figure 1: Yaoundé Architecture Coordination Levels

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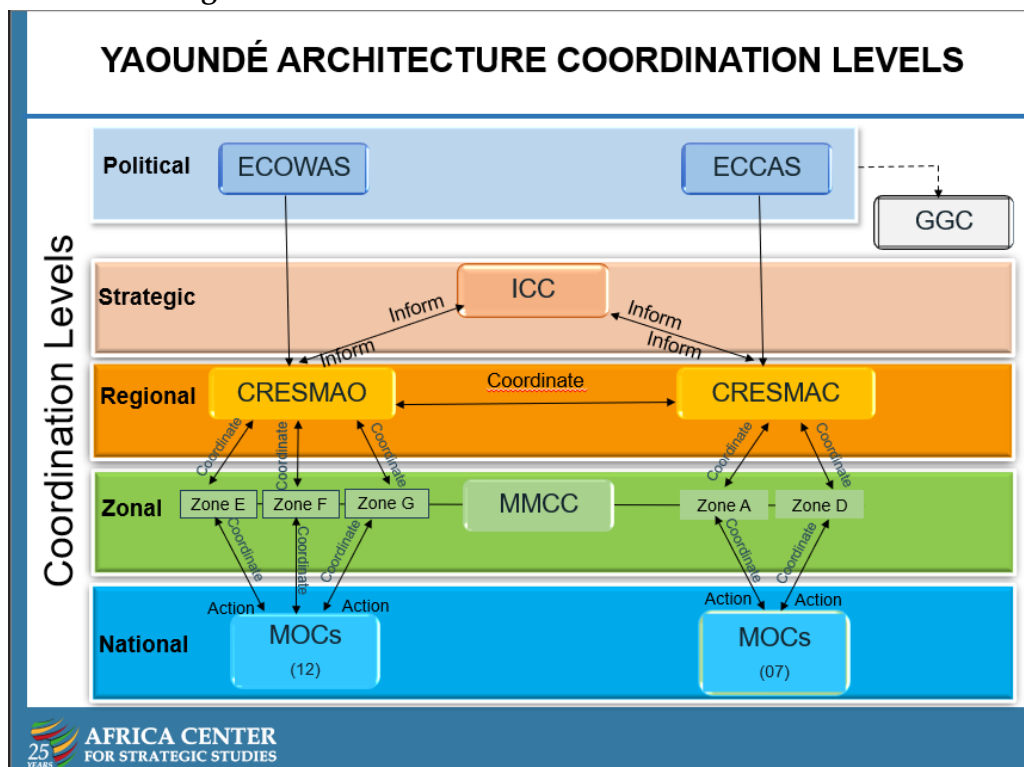
[3] Sartre, P. (2014). Responding to Insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea. *International Peace Institute.*
[4] *Ibid.*

Key Takeaways:

1. *The Yaoundé Architecture components in ECCAS are largely in place, except for some of the national MOCs and the Zone A MMCC which is not fully operational.* Across the five coordination levels depicted in figure 1 above, the components sitting at the political, strategic, and regional levels are in place. However, not all components that are intended to compose the zonal and national levels are fully operational, making it difficult to coordinate surveillance, information sharing and operations.

   a. At the zonal level, while the MMCC for Zone D is functional, the Zone A MMCC is not fully operational due to arrangements surrounding the location of its headquarters. The intention is to headquarter the MMCC in Angola, but new offices need to be constructed before the MMCC can be activated permanently. Still, cooperation between Zone A states is taking place. Zone A states coordinate on a bilateral and multilateral level and, despite not having a functional permanent headquarters, the MMCC does participate in exercises such as Obangame Express and the Grand African Nemo. Nevertheless, without a fully operational MMCC, information sharing across Zone A cannot occur in real time and CRESMAC is limited in its ability to execute its mandate to coordinate Zones A and D.

   b. The national level serves as the backbone of the entire architecture. Individual coastal states serve as the first line of defense, providing localized responses, while MOCs are intended to serve as focal points that link the national level to the rest of the YA. For this reason, there is a need to develop and implement national MOCs in an integrated whole-of-government manner. Some of the Zone A and D countries have made significant progress in developing and implementing functional MOCs. However, not all states have developed and/or fully implemented their MOCs to serve as focal points for information sharing and maritime security operations. For several states, resource constraints are cited as the main obstacle to fully develop/operationalize their centers. In other cases, not all relevant ministries are represented within MOCs. There is a tendency for the MOCs to have a strong military culture, particularly around sharing information perceived as confidential/secret, due to their staff being predominantly composed of uniformed personnel. Without adequate multi-ministry representation in MOCs, effective information sharing is hindered. Awareness that there is a difference between maritime safety and maritime security highlights the need to have multi-ministry representation within MOCs.

2. *Most countries in the region are either in the process of developing national maritime security strategies or are experiencing challenges implementing their existing strategies.* Developing and implementing integrated maritime strategies is the cornerstone for

harmonized and coordinated execution of both national maritime security measures and regional efforts. Recognizing this, most Zone A and D states are in the process of developing maritime security strategies while a few states, such as Gabon and Angola, have developed national strategies but are experiencing implementation challenges. Ensuring that states take a whole-of-government approach to developing and implementing such strategies remains a challenge. There is a tendency for stove-pipping where the maritime security strategy development and implementation relies on the military without effectively communicating with civilian stakeholders. Ensuring that strategies developed at the national level are coherent and complementary on a regional and inter-regional level is another challenge. While uniformity cannot be expected in individual state's maritime strategies because they do not have the same interests, objectives, or financial means, harmonizing strategies at the regional level remains important because the threats confronting states in the Gulf of Guinea are transnational in nature.

3. *There is a need to develop and harmonize standard operating procedures (SOPs) for coordination and information sharing at all levels of the Yaoundé Architecture.* While the MOCs, MMCCs, CRESMAC, and the ICC seem to have the technical means to share information within and across the five different level of the architecture, SOPs on what content needs to be shared, when and how frequently it should be shared, and through what mechanisms it can/should be shared are lacking. There is confusion about what information related to maritime security is pertinent to share versus what sensitive information requires additional authorizations prior to sharing. Furthermore, not all countries contribute liaison officers to the MMCCs, which creates further challenges for coordinating information sharing in a standardized manner. The lack of SOPs and legal frameworks for authorizing information sharing remain significant hurdles. Nevertheless, within and across the national, zonal and inter-regional levels, coordination still occurs, often facilitated by the will of the actors who have developed informal networks and/or non-standardized/inconsistent operating practices. If not formalized, these practices run the risk of not surviving the current holders of responsibilities within the centers. Efforts to achieve standardization are already underway. A matrix identifying the functional relations between the ICC, CRESMAO/CRESMAC, the MMCCs, and MOCs is currently under development.

Recommendations:

1.Set up and fully operationalize Zone A's MMCC as well as Angola's lead role in its development. Permanently headquartering and operationalizing the MMCC for Zone A remains a key priority. The initial intention was to set up the MMCC within an Angolan navy base. With the decision to move the location of the MMCC out of the naval base, Angola will need to, as

Cameroon did in Zone D, balance between taking the lead role in setting up the center, whilst ensuring it functions as a zonal entity. This will not only require technical arrangements and headquarters agreements to be finalized, but also greater involvement of CRESMAC and ECCAS before the MMCC can be fully operational.

2.*Development and/or implement integrated maritime security strategies.* Developing and implementing integrated national maritime security strategies that complement regional and inter-regional initiatives is another priority recommendation for operationalizing Zones A and D. To develop and implement such strategies, countries need: institutional collaboration, real engagement by the responsible state and non-state stakeholders/agencies, and continuing monitoring and evaluation. There also seems to be a consensus that establishing an inter-agency "maritime affairs" council, reporting directly to either the Prime Minister or the President is a best practice for the development and implementation of maritime security strategies and ensures that all relevant stakeholders are included.

3.*Develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) for sharing information across all levels of the YA*. Setting up SOPs for the sharing of information at all levels of the Yaoundé Architecture was identified as a crucial next step for improving information sharing across the ECCAS region. These SOPs need to be harmonized throughout the architecture, while the functional relationships between the centers must also be clarified and recorded in procedure manuals usable by all center staff in their daily activities. As efforts to achieve standardization continue, consultation and consensus need to occur at the national level, between the MOCs and the MMCCs, between the MMCCs and CRESMAC, and between CRESMAC and the ICC. Furthermore, each country within maritime Zones A and D needs to ensure they have appointed a liaison officer within each MMCC to ensure effective coordination around SOPs.

4.*Develop and implement national MOCs in an integrated and interministerial manner*. Ensuring that MOCs are developed and implemented in an integrated and interministerial manner is critical to the foundation of the entire architecture. National authorities need to make sure all relevant ministries are represented within their countries' MOCs. This will involve not only clarifying SOPs and legal frameworks for authorizing information sharing at the national level, but also cultivating a maritime culture between stakeholders based on trust. Harmonizing procedures at the national level will help to clarify the roles and responsibilities of different agencies/ministries and avoids overlaps in functions and jurisdictions. The tendency for MOCs to be predominately staffed by uniformed personnel continues to perpetuate a culture of distrust and secrecy. Regular interministerial consultations through established inter-agency councils can guarantee the dialogue necessary to address confusion over jurisdiction, information sharing, and distrust.

4.*ECCAS should play a larger role in securing predictable funding*. There is a lack of clear and predictable funding for the entire architecture across all levels of coordination. This should be addressed at the strategic level of ECCAS. To ensure the proper functioning of all components –

from MOCs to CRESMAC – ECCAS should be committing to funding them, using contributions of member states.

5.*Consistently involve CRESMAC in projects aimed at maritime security in the Central African region*. The Memorandum of Understanding between ECOWAS, ECCAS and GGC that – alongside the YCoC and Declaration of the Heads of States – inspired the current architecture in the region envision the fight against maritime insecurity as a global approach. In doing so, CRESMAC was entrusted with the mandate to harmonize procedures, deliver training and develop legislation for the Central African region. This is why partners should coordinate and engage with CRESMAC, even on bilateral projects, so as to ensure that their initiatives are consistent with the vision ECCAS has for the community in the field of maritime security.

6.*Conduct regular assessments of the YA not only in Zones A and D, but across all other Zones*. Over the past ten years, significant progress has been made in implementing the Yaoundé Code of Conduct (YCoC) and the architecture it inspired. However, though the provisions of the YCoC called for regular assessments of the architecture every three years, a full formal assessment/evaluation of progress towards fully implementing the architecture across all zones has yet to be conducted. Such assessments need to occur in regular intervals because they help to ensure continued improvements as the architecture achieves full operationalization. More broadly, regular assessment across all the zones helps to improve maritime domain awareness by identifying gaps and strengths in surveillance, monitoring, and information sharing. This leads to better detection and response to maritime threats.