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MARITIME CRIMES AND PROSECUTIONS COURSE

GOLDEN TULIP LE DIPLOMAT HOTEL, COTONOU

REPUBLIC OF BENIN

8TH TO 12TH MARCH, 2021

COURSE REPORT



Introduction and Background

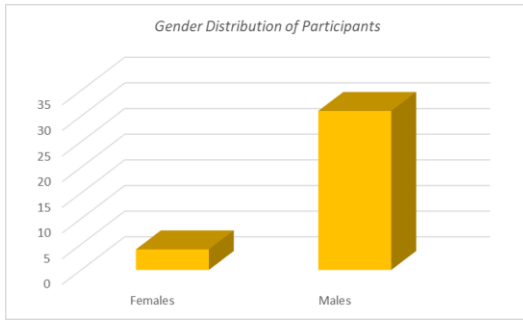
In spite of the rich marine and aquatic resources such as the huge deposits of hydrocarbons, fisheries and aqua-culture and also serving as a critical choke-point and maritime transport route for international commercial shipping lines, the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) is bedevilled with a myriad of challenges that impede developmental efforts, and ultimately threaten the human security of the people in the region. These challenges have, over the years, earned the region the unenviable reputation as the leading hotspot for maritime piracy and armed robbery in the world. In a little over ten years, the Gulf of Guinea region has overtaken the Gulf of Aden as the world's piracy hotspot. Maritime piracy and other related crimes at sea continue to persist. As part of efforts to strengthen the capacities of maritime control officers in the GoG, the second of the three training activities on Maritime Crimes and Prosecutions under the one-year project on *Maritime Security Capacity Development for Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea* was organised in Cotonou, Benin from 8th to 12th March, 2021. This project is being implemented by the KAIPTC in collaboration with the Government of Japan with technical assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The project seeks to develop technical capacity among maritime-related crime control officials in the countries forming the maritime zones E and F in the ECOWAS region.

Course aims and objectives

The five-day course sought to develop the technical capacities of maritime crime control officials in countries within ECOWAS Maritime Zones E and F, to contribute to promoting effective implementation of relevant regional and international maritime protocols in order to control maritime crime, including piracy, in the Gulf of Guinea. Further, it aimed at creating a common platform to promote intra and inter-agency cooperation and collaboration for managing maritime crimes at the national level.

Selection of Participants

The course brought together 35 participants from 10 maritime security related agencies. Participants comprised four (4) females and thirty-one (31) males.



These numbers indicate that more work needs to be done in improving female participation in such interventions. However, they are reflective of the dynamics of gender representations in the maritime sector.

The agencies represented included, the navy, the army, immigration, the justice ministry, marine police, Interpol, customs, the Multinational Maritime Coordinating Centre (MMCC zone E), the Presidency, the Maritime Prefecture and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) working on environmental issues in the maritime domain.



Opening Ceremony

The opening ceremony for the course took place just before the start of the training course on Monday, 8th March, 2021 at the Golden Tulip, le Diplomat hotel in Cotonou. In attendance were Prof. Kwesi Aning, Director of Faculty of Academic Affairs and Research (FAAR) at KAIPTC; Naval Captain, Fernand Maxime Ahoyo, the Maritime Prefect and Mr. Michel Adjaka, the immediate past President of the National Union of Magistrates of Benin, who is also Director of Cabinet, Ministry of Justice and Legislation and invited guests from the Ghana Embassy in Cotonou as well as representatives of various media houses. Naval Capt. Ahoyo welcomed all participants and invited guests and expressed his gratitude to the KAIPTC and its partners for the delivery of such an important training course in Benin considering maritime security challenges confronting the country. He urged all participants to take all aspects of the course seriously. Prof. Aning, in his opening address also expressed appreciation to the Government of Benin, especially, the leadership of the Maritime Prefecture for their warm

reception of the course and commitment towards contributing to ensuring a safer and secure maritime domain.



From right: Naval Capt. Ahoyo, Mr. Adjaka and Prof. Aning

In his key note address, Mr. Michel Adjaka, opined about the rapidly changing nature of maritime security threats in the

Gulf of Guinea region and how his country is particularly plagued with piracy and armed robbery at sea. This is negatively impacting security and development not only in Benin but also across the region. These challenges therefore call for holistic response methods which emphasise effective prosecution of maritime crimes and strengthening cooperation at all levels and therefore had great expectations that this course will contribute to efforts at improving capacities towards effective prosecutions of maritime crimes.

The opening ceremony was followed by a media briefing by Prof. Kwesi Aning of the KAIPTC and Naval Captain Fernand Maxime Ahoyo, the Maritime Prefect.¹ They both highlighted the current maritime security threats confronting not only Benin but the entire sub-region and its nefarious impact on livelihoods, development and the stability of the region and how this training, located within the broader objectives of the project seeks to contribute to developing capacity towards a safer and secure maritime domain in the Gulf of Guinea.

Course Proceedings

The five-day course began with an overview of maritime insecurities in the Gulf of Guinea, tracing the roots of these threats to already existing challenges of poor governance, weak and fragile state institutions among others. The course also exposed participants to the international, regional and more importantly, the national legal and policy frameworks governing procedures for inspection, investigations and prosecutions of maritime crimes. The course equally exposed participants to different maritime crimes such as piracy, drug and narcotics smuggling, Illegal,

¹ Please click link for media reportage: <https://www.beninintelligent.com/lutte-contre-la-criminalite-maritime-les-acteurs-renforcent-leurs-capacites/>

Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) among others and their linkages to other forms of transnational organised crimes. It also raised participants' awareness on the need to strengthen intra and inter-agency collaboration and the importance of leveraging the roles of private/non-state actors such as coastal communities, private shipping lines, research institutions etc. in ensuring a safer and secure maritime domain.



Left: A participant making an intervention

The course also offered an opportunity to participants to deepen their knowledge on the emerging national legal framework which allows for the prosecution of various maritime crimes in a specialized court. It also drew attention to the peculiar maritime crimes confronting the country and how this emerging framework could help address some of the current obstacles to effective prosecutions of maritime crimes. It was also an opportunity for participants to network and interact with actors from other agencies.



Left-above: Participants making presentations



Right-above: A cross section of participants

A field visit was also organised to the Port Autonome de Cotonou where participants received briefings on the general operations of the port. The briefing highlighted the various security measures at the port and how the port coordinates with other agencies.



Participants receive briefing from an Officer at the Port Autonome de Cotonou

The final crust of the course was a panel session which empanelled a local expert to give insights on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on maritime security operations. An officer from the Ghana Embassy was also invited to present the diplomatic processes, procedures and negotiations involved in arrests and prosecutions of maritime crimes and offense which are transnational in nature.

Facilitators

The course assembled ten (10) maritime security experts, practitioners and academics to facilitate the course. Four (4) staff from the KAIPTC, one (1) international expert from Ghana and five (5) local experts with related expertise in the field facilitation different session of the course. These different mix of facilitators brought on board diverse experiences and expertise employing mixed method facilitation approaches including, lectures, discussions, presentations, case studies and scenario based exercises which all encouraged active participation and robust discussions. Feedback from participants indicate good satisfaction with the facilitators' delivery of the modules.

Closing Ceremony

The five-day training course successfully came to a close on Friday, 12th March, 2021 where certificates of participation were presented to participants. The ceremony was presided over by Prof. Kwesi Aning, Naval Captain Ahoyo and Deputy Head of Mission from the Ghana Embassy in Cotonou, Ms. Louisa Hanson. In his closing remarks, Prof. Aning extended his felicitations to the participants and urged them to make useful the knowledge they had acquired during the training, especially to respond to challenges that they face in their line of duty. He also urged the participants to continue networking, reach out to each other, share ideas and

experiences and also share their knowledge with other colleagues. On behalf of participants, a representative of the class also expressed appreciation for the course, most especially to the KAIPTC and its partners, the government of Japan and the UNDP. They noted that, the course was highly pertinent to their line of work and also very timely. They hoped to use the knowledge acquired to address some of the challenges they are confronted with in their line of duty. They also hoped to leverage on the relationships they had formed in the course of the training to better advance responses to maritime crimes and threats that confronts the country.



Participants receiving certificates of participation

Challenges

The major challenge to the course was the low female participation. The maritime sector, like the security sector in general is a highly male dominated space with very few females. This is thus reflective of the low female participation in the training. Additionally, the five days allocated for a training programme of this nature was inadequate. This impacted the levels of discussions, contributions and experience sharing from the participants. In some instances, facilitators did not have ample time to delve deeper into some issues of critical importance. However, the training course was generally successfully organised and well received by the target audience.

Conclusion and Recommendations

On the whole, the training course was successful and organised. The team received the needed support from the host institution – Prefecture Maritime, the Ministry of Defence, Republic of Benin and also support from the Ghana Embassy in Cotonou. The necessary COVID-19 protocols were put in place and duly observed. While the low numbers of female participation continue to be a major shortfall, it is recommended that there is always strong emphasis on the nomination of female participants during the participant selection process.