

NOTES ON THE EXPERT LEVEL VIRTUAL DISCUSSION GROUP (VDG) MEETING

THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATIONS IN SUPPORT OF THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE YAOUNDÉ
CODE OF CONDUCT ARCHITECTURE

DATE: 25th - 26th March, 2021



INTERNATIONAL
MARITIME
ORGANIZATION

Supported by the International Maritime Organization (IMO)

1. INTRODUCTION

Effective implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct encompasses, among other provisions, the commitment of signatory states to establish national maritime security committees and other inter-agency processes. National maritime security strategies with related implementation plans for maritime governance are designed to enhance security in the international maritime transport sector, as indicated in Article 4 of the Code of Conduct.

The lack of clear communication to the political leadership of Signatory States and industry of the roles and missions of the components of the YCoC Architecture and the positive impacts on the economies of member states, have been identified as crucial gaps in the effective implementation of the YCoC.

Developing a strategic communication plan to familiarize the YCoC at the local and national levels within Signatory States is necessary to obtain support from political leaders, industry and other key stakeholders. An effective strategic communications plan will foster understanding of the overall objectives of the YCoC and harness the efforts of all relevant stakeholders toward the same end.

The third expert level Virtual Discussion Group Meeting on the Study of the Implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct Architecture, held on the 25th and 26th of March 2021, focused on the role of strategic communications in support of the implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct Architecture. The expert group discussed and proposed the features of a future strategic communications plan to support effective implementation of the YCoC at the national level in each Signatory state.

2. PROPOSED STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE YAOUNDE CODE OF CONDUCT

The Strategic Communications Plan will promote an effective YCoC infrastructure that supports a secure and well governed maritime space to enable trade, effective fisheries management, and the responsible production of offshore resources. The ICC is recommended to guide signatories in the development of their national strategic communication plans for the YCoC.

The main features of the draft strategic communications plan designed by the expert group are:

- An end state for the YCoC Architecture clearly articulated within the strategic communications plan – A safer and more secure Gulf of Guinea region, which will foster socio-economic development of West and Central Africa.
- A potential 'public theme' for the strategic communications plan of the YCoC, which the expert group will recommend.
- A Concept for the YCoC strategic communications plan: The experts recommended that the communication plan should detail the type and source of data that will be used to communicate and popularize the YCoC at Local, National, Regional and International level (See Attached Matrix). To encourage political support for full implementation of the YCoC Architecture, the direct and indirect benefits of investing in and implementing the YCoC should be highlighted in local and international media, in publications, and in personal outreach with various stakeholders in the Gulf of Guinea Region, particularly, the YCoC Heads of State.

Expert's Proposed Next Step:

- a. The experts agreed that a follow-on, virtual discussion group to further discuss strategic communications is required.

EXPERTS' MATRIX

| DRAFT – PROPOSED STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN ON THE YAOUNDE ARCHITECTURE (YA) | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|--|---|---|-----------------------|
| OBJECTIVES: (1) GAIN SUPPORT FROM THE HEADS OF STATE TO INVEST IN THE YAOUNDE CODE OF CONDUCT ARCHITECTURE WITH A MORE BINDING COMMITMENT (2) BUILD TRUST OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS IN THE CAPABILITIES OF THE YCOC (3) GAIN COMMITMENT FROM EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS FOR FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL RESOURCES | | | | | |
| | | | TARGET AUDIENCES | | |
| | | Local communities | Inter-Agency Committees | Heads of the signatories of YCOC | External stakeholders |
| National | Message (Theme) | | | | |
| | Methods | Songs, Videos, contests, etc. | | Facts and figures on the benefits of the YCoC, disseminated to the media and opinion outlets | |
| | Strategic plans | 1. Align STRATCOM's objectives with local interest (e.g., economic benefits) | 1. Organize expert level meetings to develop briefs for communication to political leaders. | 1. Engage academic and research institutions to generate data on maritime security and illustrate the return on investment. | |
| | | 2. Develop tailored messages in local languages to enhance local communities' understanding of measures put in place to ensure safe and secure | 2. Engage ministers to brief them on maritime security issues. | 2. Brief Heads of State on the status of maritime security and the need for effective implementation of the YCoC | |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| | | maritime domain. Emphasize economic benefits. | | | |
| Regional | Message (Theme) | X | Experts will develop public slogan/theme for outreach | | |
| | Methods | | | | |
| | Strategic plans | | 1. Encourage Interagency committees with focal points of contact | 1. Organize dedicated Heads of State summit on Maritime Security to brief leaders on the issues of maritime security and recommend the necessary actions to be taken for effective implementation of the YCoC. | 1. Identify areas of focus for international organizations and identify ways in which they can become more involved in implementation of the YCoC. |

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| | | | 2. Guide these entities in the design of strategic communication plans for national implementation of the YCoC. | 2. Look for opportunities to elevate and include issues related to GoG maritime security within regional and international meetings, conferences, and events--even if these are not maritime themed. Prepare messaging for African and industry leaders to use in these discussions. Identify public discourse where maritime security needs to be included. | 2. Create a mechanism to regularly brainstorm and solicit feedback from international and industry partners. Reinforce the positive return on investment they received for support of the YCoC. |
| International | Message (Theme) | X | | | |
| | Methods | | | | |
| | Strategic plans | | | | |