



# Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

**8457**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Tuesday, 5 February 2019, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

---

*President:* Mr. Esono Angue. . . . . (Equatorial Guinea)

*Members:*

Belgium . . . . .	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
China . . . . .	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
Côte d'Ivoire . . . . .	Mr. Ipo
Dominican Republic . . . . .	Mr. Singer Weisinger
France . . . . .	Mr. Delattre
Germany . . . . .	Mr. Schulz
Indonesia . . . . .	Mr. Djani
Kuwait . . . . .	Mr. Alotaibi
Peru . . . . .	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
Poland . . . . .	Ms. Wronecka
Russian Federation. . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
South Africa . . . . .	Mr. Nkosi
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Ms. Pierce
United States of America. . . . .	Mr. Cohen

## Agenda

### Maintenance of international peace and security

Transnational organized crime at sea as a threat to international peace and security

Letter dated 31 January 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Equatorial Guinea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2019/98)

---

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

19-02803 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Maintenance of international peace and security**

#### **Transnational organized crime at sea as a threat to international peace and security**

#### **Letter dated 31 January 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Equatorial Guinea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2019/98)**

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Italy, Japan, Norway, the Philippines, Senegal, Sri Lanka and Trinidad and Tobago to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Yuri Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and Mrs. Florentina Adenike Ukonga, Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission.

Mr. Fedotov and Mrs. Ukonga are joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Vienna and Luanda, respectively.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2019/98, which contains the text of a letter dated 31 January 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Equatorial Guinea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept note on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to Mr. Fedotov.

**Mr. Fedotov:** I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to address the Security Council on the growing threat of transnational organized crime at sea.

Two thirds of the world's surface is ocean, nearly all of it beyond any State's territorial waters and largely not subject to a single State's criminal jurisdiction. The high seas are open for vessels of all countries, both coastal and landlocked, to support international trade

and economic cooperation, contact among peoples and the responsible use of natural resources. However, in recent years the freedom of navigation has been exploited by criminal groups. Transnational maritime crime is increasingly sophisticated, and it is expanding both in terms of size and types of criminal activities.

Even as I speak, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has staff in the field working with Member States to counter the smuggling of migrants and terrorist materials and attacks on shipping in the Gulf of Aden; cocaine trafficking in the Atlantic; heroin trafficking in the Indian Ocean; piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea; kidnap for ransom in the Sulu and Celebes Seas; illegal fishing in the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific oceans; and migrant smuggling in the Mediterranean. Those crimes pose an immediate danger to people's lives and safety, undermine human rights, hinder sustainable development and, as the Council has recognized, threaten international peace and security. I am therefore grateful to the presidency of Equatorial Guinea for bringing this global issue to the Council to strengthen international responses and protect our seas from criminals.

We have a solid international legal framework in place to tackle transnational maritime crime. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, settled nearly 40 years ago, addresses only piracy in detail. But global action is reinforced by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols, as well as by the 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, the 1988 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation, the global counter-terrorism instruments, and more. That is the basis for the technical assistance and capacity-building that UNODC provides through its country, regional and global programmes.

By its very nature, maritime crime involves vessels, cargoes, crews, victims and illicit money flows from many regions. UNODC's Global Maritime Crime Programme operates out of Colombo, which puts our experts close to some of the world's busiest shipping routes. I believe that its annual report, which we just published, could be of interest to the Council, as it contains detailed information on, and analysis of, our activities in different parts of the world. Our methods, based on long-term mentoring and hands-on training,

are innovative, efficient and effective and include work at sea as well as in coast guard offices, courtrooms and prisons. Our work on maritime crime grew out of our successful counter-piracy programme off the coast of Somalia.

UNODC continues to support trials in Kenya and Seychelles, as well as the humane and secure imprisonment of convicted pirates. In that regard, I am pleased to report that we have completed the first phase of the Mogadishu Prison and Court Complex, which will be handed over shortly to the Somali Government and will provide a secure environment for trying those suspected of maritime crime and terrorism.

We implement those activities with European Union naval forces and other international naval forces, including INTERPOL, the International Maritime Organization and partners in the commercial maritime sector. We have further advanced that model of public-private cooperation through the Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime, which coordinates the response to heroin and charcoal smuggling that is funding terrorist groups, and the Contact Group on Maritime Crime in the Sulu and Celebes Seas. UNODC also supports interregional cooperation against criminal activities at sea through the so-called Yaoundé maritime security architecture.

Moreover, we are working to secure the container trade supply chain through another global programme, the joint UNODC-World Customs Organization Container Control Programme, as well as through our programmes to counter terrorism, human trafficking and migrant smuggling, wildlife and fisheries crime, firearms trafficking and emerging crimes. All our work at sea — where jurisdiction is complex, crime is often committed unseen and enforcement is difficult — builds on UNODC's long experience and research expertise in addressing all forms of organized crime, terrorism and corruption.

Going forward, we would welcome the Council's support in, first, urging all Member States to facilitate mutual legal assistance and other forms of cooperation to address the expansion of transnational organized crime at sea, through the ratification and effective use of the international legal framework; and, secondly, encouraging Member States to enhance technical assistance so we can continue operationalizing cooperation through platforms such as the Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime and through the

exchange of liaison magistrates and regional networks of prosecutors and central authorities. Such action can help to ensure that those responsible — the criminal kingpins — are brought to justice.

Finally, we would welcome the Council's continued engagement with this topic, including by encouraging discussion to identify options for enhancing coordination, as well as recommendations to better prevent and counter transnational maritime crime. UNODC is here to support the Council.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Fedotov for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mrs. Ukonga.

**Mrs. Ukonga**: It is indeed an honour for me personally, and for the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC), to have been invited to participate in this very important debate on transnational organized crime at sea as a threat to international peace and security.

The whole world knows that the primary responsibility of the Security Council is the maintenance of international peace and security, and therefore to deal with any situation or incident in the world that may constitute a threat to world peace and security. That threat can come by way of war among or within nations, but it can also be caused by religious, tribal, economic or political differences among antagonists. It can also be caused by criminal activities carried out across national boundaries, threatening the economic well-being and sustainable development of the victims of such acts. As my contribution to this very important debate, I would like to focus on transnational organized crime at sea in the Gulf of Guinea region as a threat to world peace and security.

Several countries of the region established the GGC on 3 July 2001 to ensure that such threats to the economic well-being, peace and security of the region are reduced to the barest minimum, if not completely eliminated. The region's rich endowment in hydrocarbon and living marine resources, along with its importance as a key route for maritime transport between America, Europe and Africa and onwards to Asia, also makes it a very attractive environment for criminals who want to engage in their nefarious activities. A Gulf of Guinea that is well patrolled and supervised, as well as better served socially, would reduce incidents of criminal activities in its maritime domain.

However, this, unfortunately, is not yet the case. We in the region are therefore faced with a situation of increasing criminality in the maritime domain of the Gulf of Guinea, which is destabilizing the whole region and constitutes a threat to international peace and security. The Gulf of Guinea region comprises some 13 countries, from Liberia to Angola, in an area with some 6,000 kilometres of coastline. It is a wide expanse of land and water that no single country of the region can successfully patrol. None of the countries of the region has either the capacity or the capability to even attempt to undertake that important assignment.

Hence, the countries of the region came together to form the Gulf of Guinea Commission as a forum to identify the common problems, compare notes, solve these problems, adopt best practices and encourage each member State to take on the primary responsibility for securing its maritime borders and, in case of need, to assist neighbours in doing the same by pooling resources through the establishment of maritime operations centres in each member State and multinational coordination centres with neighbouring States. We now have working multinational coordination centres in Douala and Cotonou, and regional maritime security coordination centres in two economic communities of the Gulf of Guinea region: the Economic Community of Central African States, with its Regional Center for African Maritime Security, in Pointe Noire; and the Economic Community of West African States, with its West Africa Maritime Regional Safety Center in Abidjan.

The Gulf of Guinea Commission has pursued the objectives of its establishment by organizing specialized committees to deal collectively with common issues of the region. In that vein, in 2018 the GGC organized two seminars to bring together experts of international organizations and member States to inform and brainstorm on happenings in the region and member States with a view to adopting best practices. The two seminars were organized on the following themes: “The governance of the Atlantic Ocean in the interest of peace, security and sustainable development in the Gulf of Guinea” and “The blue economy in the interest of food security in the Gulf of Guinea region”. Our next seminar will be on regional maritime strategy and unregulated migration in the Gulf of Guinea region. It is scheduled to be held in March in Accra.

Transnational organized crime at sea, as a threat to international peace and security, is not peculiar to

the Gulf of Guinea region. Other regions are equally being plagued by that scourge. While an international naval intervention from outside the Gulf of Aden has succeeded in reducing such incidents in that region, that may not be feasible in West and Central Africa, the main reason being that no country in West or Central Africa is a failed State, as was the case with Somalia. Also, the States of the region have taken and are taking measures to patrol their waters. From our own studies and analyses, we know that transnational organized crime at sea in our Gulf of Guinea region can be reduced with a better and more coordinated intervention at the national, regional and international levels.

At the national level, we must resolve national disagreements to discourage cooperation with perpetrators of transnational crime at sea; restore degraded environment caused by the exploitation of hydrocarbon resources at sea; and create social, political and economic conditions that can encourage youth employment and curb youth restiveness, especially in those countries engaged in the exploitation of natural resources such as hydrocarbons and living marine resources. In multiracial and multiracial societies, we must ensure the political inclusion of the population, especially in the coastal parts of the country. The Governments of the States of the region must commit to a serious, aggressive and sustained campaign to create real jobs at home instead of perpetuating illegal immigration abroad, as the grass is not always greener on the other side. We must improve the capacity and capability of national navies to undertake effective patrolling of the maritime domain. We must ensure the domestication and implementation of agreements signed on the suppression of criminal activities at sea in the Gulf of Guinea region, such as the Yaoundé Code of Conduct on the prevention and repression of acts of piracy, armed robbery against vessels, and illicit activities in the West and Central African maritime domain, of 25 June 2013.

At the regional level, we must promote cooperation with neighbouring States to share information on suspicious movements in the maritime domain; undertake joint patrols and surveillance of the maritime domain; collaborate in the operationalization of agreed maritime strategy; mutualize maritime assets for better coordination and implementation of agreed strategies and policies; ensure the effective functioning of the multinational coordination centres in Douala and Cotonou and of the Regional Center for African

Maritime Security, in Pointe Noire, and the West Africa Maritime Regional Safety Center, in Abidjan; ensure the effective functioning of the Interregional Coordination Center in Yaoundé, established subsequent to the adoption of resolution 2018 (2011), of 31 October 2011, and resolution 2039 (2012), of 29 February 2012.

At the international level, we must promote the assistance and collaboration of international parties and other stakeholders with countries of the region in order to enable them to carry out their agreed programmes and projects for the reduction and eradication of poverty; encourage direct investment in facilities and infrastructure to benefit the population; take action to discourage illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the region and to compel transnational companies to use best practices in their exploitation activities in order to avoid sea pollution and environmental degradation in the region; move to establish mechanisms to criminalize the purchase of stolen crude oil and to discourage the commission of such crimes by entities outside the region; ensure that the proceeds of such crimes are forfeited to the Governments of the States from which such resources are stolen; and establish international mechanisms to control the dumping of toxic residues in the territorial waters of the region and international waters adjacent to the region.

With this three-pronged approach, the threat of transnational organized crime at sea to international peace and security will be greatly reduced, if not completely eradicated, in the Gulf of Guinea region.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mrs. Ukonga for her briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Equatorial Guinea.

As His Excellency Mr. Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, Head of State of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, did here in this Chamber yesterday, I would like to start by expressing the enormous satisfaction and honour that I feel being here today presiding over this meeting. I would also like to welcome this debate on “Maintenance of international peace and security: Transnational organized crime at sea as a threat to international peace and security”.

Not only do the oceans unite the nations; natural resources are paramount and among the most important vehicles for the progress of humankind. In Africa,

the rise of international organized crime in our seas and oceans, its growing relationship with terrorist groups and armed groups in the region, and the consequences of climate change are posing a growing threat to the consolidation of development in recent decades, especially the sustainable development of the blue economy.

Illegal activities in the African maritime space — maritime terrorism, money-laundering, dumping of toxic waste and crude oil, robbery of crude oil and natural gas, arms and drug trafficking, human and refugee trafficking, piracy and armed robbery, illegal fishing, overfishing and environmental crimes — lead to loss of life and economic losses on a scale that is devastating for our continent.

As on the African continent, more than 90 per cent of world trade is carried out by sea. Maritime insecurity in the region has an impact on the industrial and economic development of countries. It is for that reason that the African Union’s Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlight the importance of investment for the sustainable development of seas, oceans and marine resources.

Through its 2050 Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy, launched in 2010, the African Union is working to promote the development of a prosperous and sustainable blue economy in a safe and environmentally sustainable manner. The Strategy’s first stage, which ends this year, has focused on the active promotion of information exchange, communication, collaboration, cooperation, capacity-building and coordination within and among the subregions of the continent.

The countries of the Central and West African subregions, including the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, share one maritime space, the Gulf of Guinea — one of the largest and most populated geopolitical spaces on the African continent, with an area of 5.6 million square kilometres and a population of about 260 million people. In order to defend common interests and promote peace and socioeconomic development in the countries of this maritime domain, the Gulf of Guinea Commission was established in 2001 as a permanent institutional framework for cooperation made up of eight member countries, including the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

My country is firmly committed to contributing to the sustainable development of Africa and the world and, as we have demonstrated on many occasions, to supporting global and regional efforts in the fight

against organized maritime crime in all its forms and against terrorism. Equatorial Guinea participates very actively in all initiatives seeking to normalize the security situation in the Gulf of Guinea, such as the Obangame Express military exercises, conducted jointly with the United States and the other countries of the Gulf of Guinea.

Most of the threats to our security come from the Gulf of Guinea, as do the resources that sustain our economy and have enabled us to develop our country in recent years. That area is therefore of vital importance for the subsistence of my country, and some of our efforts to resolve disputes with neighbouring countries in the Gulf of Guinea have met with success — we recently signed a security agreement with our sister Federal Republic of Nigeria to better protect our mutual interests.

The Gulf of Guinea Commission has also demonstrated its commitment through the Luanda Declaration on Peace and Security in the Gulf of Guinea Region of 2012 and the Declaration of the Heads of State and Government of Central and West African States on Maritime Safety and Security in their Common Maritime Domain, adopted in 2013 in Yaoundé.

Those Declarations established guidelines for promoting and implementing a permanent mechanism to enforce and monitor peace and security in the region and for ensuring development both at sea and on land, with the participation of a number of subregional organizations, such as the Economic Community of Central African States, the Economic Community of West African States and the Maritime Organization of West and Central Africa, and in close collaboration with the African Union, the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone and the United Nations.

Those efforts have achieved the strategic result of the adoption of the Code of Conduct Concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships, and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa, also signed in Yaoundé in 2013, a key instrument for ensuring accountability with regard to maritime peace and stability in the region, whose implementation is currently undergoing initial technical evaluations. In September 2014, the Gulf of Guinea Commission established the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea in Yaoundé to ensure the implementation of the Code of Conduct and other strategies related to maritime safety

and protection in West and Central Africa. Since then, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea has contributed to the implementation of the Commission's instruments and strategies. One of its major contributions was the establishment, financing and maintenance of a naval military vocational school in the city of Bata, where officers and junior officers from 20 African States have been trained to date.

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea in the past decade accounted for 30 per cent of all attacks in African waters. There are three main reasons for that. First, there has been progress in the fight against piracy off the East African coast. Secondly, there has been some success in the containment of drug and arms trafficking by land routes in Africa and other continents. Thirdly, there is a need to strengthen the capacity to develop and enforce regional and national legal frameworks to combat maritime crime, as the perceived low risk of breaking the law attracts criminals to engage in illegal fishing, among other things.

What is happening in the Gulf of Guinea is important to all of us here. The Gulf of Guinea is an important shipping route for commercial shipments from Europe and America to West, Central and Southern Africa. It is key to the global energy supply because of its proximity to Europe and North America. And it is an important source of natural resources for the United States, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and European countries. The Gulf of Guinea is also rich in animal and mineral resources for the sustainable economic development of its member countries and Africa, where the diet of 40 per cent of the population is based on fish products.

The Heads of State of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, with particular reference to the Declarations I referred to, requested that the African Union Commission, the United Nations and the other strategic partners represented in this Chamber support the efforts that they are making to ensure maritime peace and security, combat terrorism and piracy and achieve the sustainable development of the countries of the region, some of which are among the most in need in the world and are at the same time faced with conflict situations and large populations of refugees and displaced persons.

Resolutions 2018 (2011), 2316 (2016) and 2383 (2017) and presidential statement S/PRST/2016/4, among other documents, recognize the need for collective action. The only way to ensure maritime

security is to work together — if we do so, we will be able to reap the immense benefits that the sea has to offer. With regard to Central Africa, it is fair to say that the level of interest, research and investment by the United Nations in the region is far lower than that shown in other regions of Africa. Turning a blind eye to the maritime importance of Central Africa undermines continental and global efforts to establish the true value of the region's marine resources and to achieve the sustainable development of our oceans through fair trade and the development and the implementation of relevant legal frameworks.

In conclusion, I appeal to all those present that we do everything possible to remedy the situation so that we can build on and strengthen progress and our collective efforts in the fight against terrorism and transnational organized crime, with the goal of consolidating peace and security in our world.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to other Council members who wish to make a statement.

**Mr. Delattre** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Equatorial Guinea for taking the initiative of organizing this meeting on transnational organized crime at sea, and I welcome the presence of the country's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. I also thank Mr. Yuri Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and Mrs. Florentina Adenike Ukonga, Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, for their especially informative briefings. I wish to make three points.

First, maritime insecurity caused by transnational crime at sea represents an even greater security threat given the significance of the related economic and social challenges. The following statistics suffice to illustrate the risks posed by maritime insecurity: 90 per cent of world trade is maritime. As previously mentioned, the Gulf of Guinea is one of the largest offshore oil fields in the world, with estimated reserves of 24 billion barrels, or 5 per cent of the world's total reserves, while almost 40 per cent of world's maritime traffic passes through the Strait of Bab Al-Mandab. Transnational organized crime therefore has found a natural if not ideal milieu at sea, while the threats posed to maritime security are anything but theoretical. Maritime piracy in the Gulf of Aden and acts of robbery in the Gulf of Guinea perfectly illustrate the threat that transnational organized crime

at sea poses to individuals, States and businesses. Moreover, some criminal groups know how to take advantage of maritime insecurity in order to engage in other forms of trafficking, including trafficking in migrants, as we have seen in the Mediterranean Sea. Drug trafficking on the high seas, whether of heroin from Afghanistan or cocaine produced in South America, fuels terrorist groups and destabilizes entire economies by fostering corruption. The plundering of fisheries resources is another harsh reality that destabilizes coastal regions and inflicts harmful environmental and socioeconomic consequences.

Secondly, the alarming observation I just made makes it all the more necessary to act robustly at the international and regional levels to contain the threats identified. France is fully committed to combating maritime insecurity in many regions, in particular in the Gulf of Guinea, the Mediterranean and the Caribbean. In our national capacity, to give just one example, we have maintained a presence in the Gulf of Guinea for 25 years through Mission *Corymbe* and related cooperation activities in the areas of security and defence. We rely on a permanent network of partners to help partner countries strengthen their coastal surveillance and response capacities and, since 2015, we have been training experts at the Interregional Institute for Maritime Security in Abidjan. We are also participating in European Union activities in the Gulf of Aden under Operation *Atalanta*, which has played a key role in reducing the number of acts of piracy in the region and is currently conducting numerous programmes to strengthen the capacity of States. Operation *Atalanta* therefore represents a true success story that has made a significant contribution on the ground, for which the European Union and the States concerned should be commended.

In the Gulf of Guinea, the States of the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission have been particularly active since 2013. Through the Group of Seven Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, France has robustly supported the establishment of an interregional maritime security architecture as part of the Yaoundé process. The establishment of the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, which is a unique mechanism for the implementation and monitoring of the regional strategy to combat maritime insecurity, represents a major step in that direction.

Thirdly, and in conclusion, I would like to make three priority recommendations to strengthen our commitment to combating maritime insecurity. The first recommendation is to strengthen the capacities of vulnerable States, which is crucial for preventing and combating the full spectrum of maritime crime — piracy, trafficking in drugs, oil and human beings and the smuggling of migrants. In that regard, it is necessary to focus on the development of a judicial and prison system that is capable of addressing those phenomena within the framework of the rule of law; UNODC clearly has a central role to play in that area. The second recommendation is to promote better cooperation among all State actors and regional and international organizations, in particular to step up information-sharing. Close cooperation with economic and non-governmental actors, beginning with the maritime industry, is obviously necessary in that regard. The third recommendation, as a broader priority, is to ensure that coastal populations are provided with alternatives by pursuing ambitious development policies. The combination of those three lines of action will make it possible to effectively combat transnational crime at sea.

Rest assured of France's commitment to continue to spare no effort in that regard.

**Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve** (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): We thank Equatorial Guinea for organizing this important and timely debate on maritime security. We also thank Mr. Fedotov and Mrs. Ukonga for their briefings.

As you mentioned, Mr. President, 90 per cent of world trade is maritime, and Belgium has always been a hub of international maritime trade. Several Belgian shipping and dredging companies are active worldwide and are particularly exposed to maritime crime. The port of Antwerp is the most important maritime hub for trade transactions between the European Union and the African continent and has established close links with several ports in the Gulf of Guinea, including Dakar, San Pedro, Cotonou and Kribi. We are concerned about the increase in piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Since 2013, Belgium has joined the Group of Seven Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea to support the Yaoundé interregional process. As a member of the European Union's task force for maritime safety in the Gulf of Guinea, Belgium provides concrete assistance to the European Union Action Plan 2015-2020 in support of the efforts of the Economic Community of West

African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission.

Transnational maritime crime is a complex and multifaceted issue that makes use of legal and security gaps in international waters, the difficulties of ensuring full control of all maritime coasts and of inadequate regional cooperation, and the deep-seated roots of organized crime and terrorism. A comprehensive and integrated approach is needed to meet this multidimensional challenge, and measures must be taken in many areas, including defence, security and justice.

First, on the defence and security front, Belgium has engaged in several important international efforts. We are participating in Operation Atalanta, which combats maritime piracy in the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Gulf of Oman. We have deployed a frigate to the Operation for four periods of three months each and have also taken part in the command of the Operation. Belgium also helped to create the Maritime Security Centre-Horn of Africa, in which marine forces and commercial shipping cooperate closely. Finally, every year since 2013, our navy has sent a ship to the Gulf of Guinea to support the countries of the region in strengthening their maritime capacities.

On the policing and judicial front, Belgium has taken a number of important steps. First, thanks to international legal cooperation, new legislation and the proactive efforts of our police and justice services, several notorious pirates have been convicted in Belgium. The best-known case is probably the 2013 conviction of Mohamed Abdi Hassan, who was behind the 2009 attack on the Belgian dredging ship *Pompeii*. Secondly, based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Belgium has adopted a very progressive law that provides flexible options for interviewing, arresting and detaining pirates' accomplices and involves close cooperation between judicial, police and naval personnel. Belgium has also developed a legal framework for deploying private armed guards to protect merchant ships. We have also taken a strong stand on the issue of maritime drug trafficking. At the port of Antwerp, in one of the first arrangements of this kind in the world, local and federal police, the social inspectorate, customs authorities and the public prosecutor's office are working under a single administration to promote exchanges and increase efficiency.



Our national efforts are therefore important, and we believe that the most vulnerable States deserve to be supported, because we are all affected. The support provided by the United Nations and a number of its entities, particularly the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, is extremely useful and should be increased. However, we all know that our national efforts will be in vain if they are not accompanied by genuine regional and international cooperation. Here, too, we can and must do better, because crime thrives when our efforts are fragmented.

Lastly, we cannot properly understand the phenomenon of maritime crime without examining its deep roots, including deteriorating economic conditions for large sections of a population and a lack of future prospects.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome you, Sir, as President of the Security Council, and we thank you for taking the initiative to convene today's meeting. We also thank Mr. Fedotov and Mrs. Ukonga for their briefings.

We share the concerns about the expansion of international criminal groups' activities, including on the high seas. Sadly, we have failed to halt the worsening spiral of illegal migration, while the scale of the illicit trade in arms and drugs has grown and human trafficking continues. We are encountering threats of piracy and robbery at sea in many regions today. The Russian Federation is especially concerned about recent robberies of commercial vessels involving hostage-taking of Russian crew members.

Establishing a systematic approach to preventing and eliminating complex criminal activity is not an easy task. We welcome the efforts in that regard of a number of United Nations mechanisms that have frequently proved effective, including the regular sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, based in Vienna. The General Assembly and its Third Committee continue to focus on various aspects of countering illegal activity. There is also successful cooperation in regional formats, particularly those such as the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, the Maritime Forum of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the East Asia Summit on Maritime Security and Cooperation. The United Nations Office on Drugs and

Crime is actively involved, primarily by providing interested States with specialized technical assistance at their request. We welcome and support such efforts.

The Russian Federation has traditionally advocated strengthening the central coordinating role of the United Nations in fighting crime, and we believe it is essential to establish under the auspices of the United Nations a universal, intergovernmental coordination mechanism with a mandate for broad functions and geographic scope that is independent of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia and other regional forums that combat maritime piracy and crime. Establishing such a specialized structure would make it significantly easier to resolve a number of issues in the fight against new challenges and threats at sea.

In the context of such threats, the Council naturally will not remain on the sidelines. It has frequently discussed specific aspects of piracy and robbery at sea in various regions of the world, as well as human trafficking in situations of armed conflict. Needless to say, it has also given major attention to the ongoing close links between armed conflicts, terrorism and the various forms of transnational organized crime, including illicit trafficking in weapons, drugs and cultural heritage objects as well as illegal migration. The Security Council has developed a serious legal foundation in all those areas through its adoption of specific resolutions and presidential statements. However, there are areas where its power and prerogatives are not so clear. A lot of questions would be asked if the Security Council took it upon itself to regulate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, or the degradation of the maritime environment, for instance. Under the Charter of the United Nations, the Council's job is to respond as effectively, situationally and efficiently as possible to crises that threaten international peace and security.

That said, we reaffirm our determination to continue to contribute to expanding international cooperation on law enforcement in order to eliminate urgent threats posed by transnational organized crime.

**Mr. Cohen** (United States of America): I would like to thank you, Mr. Esono Angue, for joining us and presiding over today's meeting. I also thank Mr. Fedotov and Mrs. Ukonga for their briefings. The United States thanks Equatorial Guinea for putting this deeply problematic side effect of our modern global economy on the Security Council's agenda. All of us rely on ships to carry the world's goods safely from

one port to another. We all have a stake in stopping crime at sea. It is an issue too large for one nation to handle alone.

Every country should be deploying a broad range of tools — diplomatic, economic, social, military, intelligence, law-enforcement and judicial — to tackle the problem. Likewise, all countries that have ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols should redouble their efforts to implement it more effectively. We urge all States that have not yet done so to ratify the Convention, and all States parties to ensure that their domestic laws appropriately criminalize the core offences listed in the Convention and its Protocols. Doing so will make it easier for law-enforcement and criminal justice authorities to investigate and prosecute transnational criminals.

In addition, there are numerous existing Security Council resolutions that promote maritime security, and their implementation is keeping our seas safer. Resolution 1816 (2008) led to the coordinated deployment of international naval forces to fight piracy off the coast of Somalia, resulting in a steady decline in pirate attacks and hijackings since 2011. Resolution 2036 (2012) banned the export of Somali charcoal, successfully cutting off an important revenue stream for Al-Shabaab and weakening its ability to carry out its acts of terror. Resolution 2216 (2015) established a targeted arms embargo to prevent acts that threaten peace, security and stability in Yemen, and in connection with it, the United States Navy has seized weapons that were destined for Houthi rebels. Resolution 2375 (2017) banned ship-to-ship transfers of any items or goods to or from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to prevent it from illegally selling coal and buying fuel, and resolution 2397 (2017) enabled States to seize and impound any ships violating those sanctions. Resolution 2146 (2014) banned illegal oil exports from Libya and authorized States to take action against such vessels through the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011).

In addition to those tools, capacity-building is vital to addressing maritime security. The United States has been a long-time partner for many countries in those efforts. President Trump renewed that commitment in his February 2017 executive order on transnational criminal organizations, in which he directed our Government to assist partners in strengthening their maritime security capabilities. In support of the 2013 Yaoundé process,

the United States works with INTERPOL and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to provide assistance to Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria in the Gulf of Guinea. We work together to improve regional information-sharing, maritime law-enforcement interdiction and investigation capabilities and legal reforms. To combat offshore listed activities in Africa, the United States Africa Command has worked with European and African partners since 2011 to conduct annual at-sea maritime exercises in the Gulf of Guinea and the Gulf of Aden, programmes that have increased law enforcement's capacity to interdict illicit goods, counter human trafficking and prevent unlawful fishing.

International drug trafficking also threatens maritime security, including for people who depend on our oceans, especially since global cocaine and opium production hit record highs in 2018. In order to address that, President Trump announced a global call to action on the world drug problem in his September 2018 speech at the General Assembly (see A/73/PV.6), with the objective of reducing drug demand, cutting off the supply of illicit drugs, expanding treatment and strengthening international cooperation.

Organized crime at sea hurts us all and requires a coordinated response from us all. Making real progress on that issue will require concrete action and even stronger international cooperation, for which the United States will remain a strong partner.

**Mr. Ipo** (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time I have addressed the Council since the Republic of Equatorial Guinea assumed its presidency, while welcoming your presence here, Mr. President, I would also like to congratulate your country and extend to Ambassador Ndong Mba and his team my best wishes for their successful leadership of the Council's work during the month of February.

Côte d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea, like the other countries of the Gulf of Guinea, have been dealing with persistent maritime insecurity and acts of piracy for a number of years. In view of the major importance of the maritime sector to the economies of the Gulf of Guinea States, it is clear that in addition to being a threat to peace and security, acts of maritime piracy undermine the tireless efforts of the countries of the region to achieve economic and social development. It is therefore for good reason that we welcome Equatorial Guinea's choice of the topic of transnational organized

crime at sea, whose challenges are even more clear thanks to the informative briefings from Mr. Yury Fedotov and Mrs. Ukonga, whom we want to thank.

The steady drop in the number of attacks on ships between 2013 and 2015 fuelled hopes that the Gulf of Guinea was gradually ceasing to be a maritime risk area. According to International Maritime Bureau (IMB) statistics, attacks on ships in the region fell from 52 in 2013 to 41 in 2014 and 31 in 2015, declines of 21 per cent and 24 per cent for the two periods. Unfortunately, in 2018 such acts of piracy, mainly targeting merchant ships, saw an upward trend in West Africa. According to the latest annual report of the IMB's Piracy Reporting Centre, the number of acts of piracy recorded between Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of Congo more than doubled, reaching 82 of the total of 87 recorded around the African continent. The area also has the highest concentration of violent acts during the year, including 100 per cent of the six ship hijackings, 13 of 18 incidents involving firing on boats, 130 of 141 hostage-taking incidents and 78 of the 83 kidnappings for ransom worldwide.

Acts of piracy are a serious concern for those States, especially since they now affect the safety and security of their port infrastructures, which are the lifeblood of local economies. In order to keep these threats in check, the States of the Gulf of Guinea have recognized the urgent need to provide effective and sustainable responses to them. With the adoption of resolution 2039 (2012), which encouraged them to develop a regional strategy to combat piracy and create a multinational and transregional mechanism for the entire Gulf region, those States developed a common strategy for fighting maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea, adopted on 25 June 2013 by the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission at the Yaoundé Summit. The Summit also enabled them to approve a code of conduct and a memorandum of understanding on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea establishing an Interregional Coordination Centre in Yaoundé designed to cooperate with the Regional Centre for Central African Maritime Security in Pointe-Noire, in the Republic of the Congo, and the ECOWAS Regional Maritime Security Centre in Abidjan, in Côte d'Ivoire. This institutional network, perfectly aligned with 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy for oceans and seas, has been

boosted by the implementation of subregional counter-strategies such as the ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Strategy, adopted on 29 March 2014 in Yamoussoukro.

The resurgence in acts of piracy demands that the Council address the urgent need to strengthen the logistical and operational capacities of the States of the region and further promote subregional cooperation. Côte d'Ivoire remains convinced that subregional and regional strategies can be effective only when based first and foremost on strong national strategies and capacities, since the primary responsibility for ensuring peace and security lies with each State. With that in mind, and with the support of its bilateral and multilateral partners, my country has therefore adopted a national strategy for State action at sea aimed at creating a secure, adequate and sustainable maritime space for Côte d'Ivoire that serves economic prosperity and human development. In order to implement the strategy, we have acquired four patrol boats and opened maritime operations centres in our two main ports in order to enable our navy to better identify and prevent threats, protect our maritime resources and share data with neighbouring countries. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the gratitude of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to its bilateral and multilateral partners for their multifaceted support in implementing our State action at sea and building our national capacity for tackling the challenge of maritime insecurity. With regard to subregional cooperation, my country's hosting of the Regional Maritime Security Centre for West Africa and the Interregional Institute for Maritime Security is a clear reflection of its commitment to combating maritime insecurity.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the efforts of the States of the Gulf of Guinea to strengthen their national capacities in synergy with the African Union and all its international partners. We believe that in order to be effective, the Gulf of Guinea States must act according to the three rules of cooperation, coordination and collaboration. We must strengthen the coordination among our national institutional actors, including navies, coastguards, port police, customs officers and legal authorities. Ultimately, that coordination should result in a single space within which States' police, customs and legal institutions can share information and where the right to prosecute the perpetrators of acts of maritime piracy on sea and on land is recognized.

Furthermore, finding sustainable solutions to acts of maritime piracy must be conducted within the

framework of a holistic approach that integrates the fight against poverty and unemployment, two scourges that foster the recruitment of many young people by maritime crime networks. In that regard, my country would like to emphasize the important role of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council. We commend the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in providing its technical assistance in building the capacity of West African States.

In conclusion, I would like to affirm my country's belief that building national capacities and strengthening cooperation among States, regional and international organizations must be the basis for our action if we are to effectively combat maritime insecurity and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

**Mr. Schulz** (Germany): First of all, I would like to thank Equatorial Guinea for organizing this debate and Mr. Esono Angue for presiding over it. We would also like to thank Mr. Fedotov and Mrs. Ukonga for their excellent briefings.

Piracy, armed robbery at sea and other illicit and illegal activities in the Gulf of Guinea remain a source of concern. We are not talking about petty crime. Left unchecked, such activities could destabilize the entire region. As we heard from the briefers this morning, the coastal States, the region and the international community as a whole have analysed the risks and have acted on them. However, we can and should do more. We can build on a solid foundation of regional efforts and international cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea. We applaud the leadership demonstrated by the countries of the region. The Summit in June 2013 that included members of the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) was a turning point. I am especially grateful to Mrs. Ukonga of the GGC for the great work that the Commission has done on this over many years.

Germany has been active in the region for many years, bilaterally and as part of the European Union (EU). We have supported the Yaoundé process for maritime security in West Africa. To give two examples, Germany contributed funding to the Interregional Coordination Centre in Yaoundé, and as a member of the Group of Seven Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, we have contributed financial support to four regional coordination centres in Benin, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Cabo Verde.

Let us not forget the substantial role of the European Union. Among other things, the European Union supported the Critical Maritime Routes Gulf of Guinea project and its successor, the Gulf of Guinea Interregional Network, and it will continue to help and assist as part of the EU strategy for the Gulf of Guinea aimed at supporting efforts by coastal States and regional organizations.

The European Union's greater maritime security strategic effort, however, extends beyond the Gulf of Guinea. In the framework of its common security and defence policy, to which some speakers have already alluded, the EU is notably engaged with a military operation and a civilian mission with a maritime focus on the Horn of Africa, the European Union Naval Force Operation Atalanta and the EU Capacity Building Mission in Somalia. Germany is contributing personnel and assets to both. Germany is also currently supporting the implementation of the Port State Measures Agreement of the Food and Agriculture Organization to the tune of €1 million in order to support harbour States in combating illegal fishing. In that context regional ownership is key to success.

Tackling criminal networks that deal in piracy, trafficking, robbery and theft requires wit and stamina. Crimes on the high seas pay well and criminal networks have proved highly adaptable in protecting their sources of income. We need a combination of intelligence, policing and support by armed forces. We have to cut financial flows and recover the funds derived from criminal activities. At the same time, we have to look at the root causes of the issue. The fight against criminal networks at sea can only be successful when socioeconomic development in the region is fostered. A lack of jobs and opportunities can push marginalized populations into illegal pursuits. Without legal sources of income, young people are easily attracted by criminal networks.

Once again, we are grateful to Equatorial Guinea for organizing this debate. As a trading nation, Germany depends heavily on the freedom of the seas. We will continue to support regional and other multilateral initiatives aimed at guaranteeing safe and unhindered navigation.

**Mr. Singer Weisinger** (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, for his informative

briefing today, and to Her Excellency Mrs. Florentina Adenike Ukonga, Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission. And through you, Mr. President, I would like to thank Equatorial Guinea for coordinating this debate on an issue that the Dominican Republic also considers particularly important.

Transnational organized crime at sea continues to be one of the main threats to international security and global economic stability, which is obvious, considering that the sea, which occupies two-thirds of the planet, is an essential space for the continued development of humankind. It is up to all States, regardless of their geographic location, to protect this essential common good. As we have already seen, piracy, armed robbery, trafficking in arms and drugs, the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons are some of the scourges committed by organized crime throughout our seas and oceans whose modalities are constantly changing. That requires appropriate action. In that regard, the availability of resources and cooperation among States are essential.

Among the evils that have been mentioned, one of the most harmful is transnational drug trafficking, which affects almost all regions, and our country is no exception to that scourge. Regardless of where our countries are placed in the range of activities of those criminal organizations, whether in production, trafficking or consumption, the severe negative impacts of such activities damage our societies and economies.

The figures available regarding this issue are heartbreaking and alarming. The trafficking of cocaine and heroin gives rise to drug trafficking by sea of more lethal substances, which have been described as epidemics. I am talking about the trafficking of opioids, which in 2018 represented nearly 90 per cent of global seizures, in the countries of North, Central and West Africa alone, and in the United States in 2017 claimed the lives of approximately 48,000 people, equivalent to 68 per cent of all overdoses.

Bearing witness to that reality, we can understand that apart from the dangers that it poses to public health, transnational drug trafficking is an obstacle to economic growth and a threat to the national security of our countries, which weaken the rule of law and undermine public confidence, heightening the weaknesses of our regions and limiting our development.

From our own regional experience, we understand that combating transnational organized crime and the

use of our seas and oceans for such purposes depends to a great extent on our ability to deepen cooperation among our nations. It is a matter of joining efforts to combat a common evil that affects all of us by optimizing resources and strengthening our national and regional capacities.

The implementation of joint maritime operations, improvements in the collection, analysis and exchange of intelligence information, the best possible infrastructure, equipment and training, and judicial and law enforcement systems, including customs, counter-narcotics agencies and coast guards, among others, are in accordance with the relevant international instruments on the protection of our maritime space. All that should keep pace with the threats that we face and the capacity of each State, since the burden of responsibility of some transit States, such as ours, is sometimes disproportionate to that of others that are the final destination or market.

That assessment is relevant, since it serves as a way to contain a general problem that has differentiated impacts on States and tends to drain vital resources for the development of basic social policies. We must ask ourselves whether that strategy is beneficial to all and how cooperation mechanisms can better distribute the burden of responsibilities.

Finally, we cannot fail to address the root causes that fuel the participation of young people in transnational organized crime, including limited development opportunities, as a preventive policy.

**Mr. Ma Zhaoxu** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Equatorial Guinea for its initiative in convening this open debate under the rotating presidency of the Security Council for this month. I welcome His Excellency Mr. Oyono Esono Angue, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Equatorial Guinea, to New York and would like to thank him for presiding over this meeting. I also thank Mr. Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and Mrs. Ukonga, Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC), for their briefings.

Oceans are a fount of the resources on which we rely for our survival and development. They are instrumental to international peace and security, interconnectivity and free trade. Pirate attacks and armed robbery at sea still occur frequently. Maritime trafficking in arms, drugs and persons continues unabated. Illegal funds flow into terrorist organizations, extremist

forces and criminal groups, exacerbating national and regional instability and threatening international peace and security.

In recent years, pirate attacks in the Gulf of Aden have significantly decreased thanks to the concerted efforts of the international community. However, the situation of maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, off the west coast of Africa, remains grim and has severely affected the economic and social development of coastal States in Africa. China always actively supports mutual, pragmatic and win-win maritime security cooperation and abides by the new common, comprehensive, integrated and sustainable maritime security strategy. We support the countries concerned in their efforts to enhance coordination, formulate common strategies and mechanisms, and combat transnational organized crime at sea, thereby promoting development and prosperity in the coastal States and regions. I would like to highlight the following points.

First, we should assist the capacity-building efforts of coastal States, while respecting their sovereignty. That involves supporting coastal States in improving their domestic legislation and in establishing and strengthening maritime security forces. The international community should take an active part in the construction, operation and maintenance of the ports and other facilities of the coastal States so that they can provide better service to ships in the areas of docking, supplies and maintenance and be better equipped to provide adequate logistical support. It is also necessary to help coastal States and areas, as well as countries of the region, to improve their operational capacity in joint law enforcement and monitoring.

Secondly, regional and subregional organizations should have a greater role and a long-term mechanism should be put in place at the regional level. China welcomes the adoption of the Charter on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa at the African Union (AU) Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa, which guides the way forward for African countries to jointly address maritime security issues and develop the marine economy. We call on the international community to support regional and subregional organizations such as the AU, the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the GGC in their efforts to fully implement the comprehensive anti-piracy strategy. We support the

capacity-building of the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa, the Regional Maritime Security Centre for West Africa and the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea through increased funding and technological input and enhanced information-sharing so that the regional mechanisms can operate fully and effectively over the long term.

Thirdly, it is necessary to mobilize resources to strengthen international cooperation. The relevant United Nations agencies, including the International Maritime Organization, and INTERPOL, among others, should provide more assistance to coastal States. Drawing on past successes and on the basis of full consultation with the coastal States, the international community should strengthen joint law enforcement, increase the transfer of pirates and others suspected of transnational organized crime at sea, step up the exchange of evidence and information and facilitate the investigation, prosecution and trial of relevant cases with all the necessary assistance.

Fourthly, I would like to point out the importance of increasing development assistance to coastal States. Development is the overarching key to solving all problems. The international community should look at the economic and social development plans of those countries and increase assistance to help them root out the causes of poverty and social injustice, speed up economic and social development and increase the youth employment rate and counter-terrorism cooperation so as to effectively combat transnational organized crime at sea.

China has always been good friend, partner and brother of African States and has been by their side through thick and thin. We adhere to the policy concept of sincerity, practical results, affinity and good faith towards Africa, uphold the values of friendship, justice and shared interests and actively assist Africa in its security capacity-building. In accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, China has carried out escort operations in Somalia's coastal waters, actively participated in international cooperation against piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and provided assistance to coastal States in strengthening infrastructure and other capacity-building.

China will continue to implement the Beijing action plan adopted at the Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in September last year so as to

strengthen our exchange and cooperation with African ports and support African countries in promoting port informatization. We will scale up defence and security assistance in Africa and strengthen results-based cooperation in the areas of social governance, counter-terrorism and counter-piracy. The China-Africa peace and security cooperation fund will be put in place to support Africa's efforts in strengthening maritime law enforcement capacity-building. China stands ready to continue its efforts to support African countries in achieving lasting peace and common prosperity.

**Mr. Djani (Indonesia):** First of all, I would like to begin by thanking Equatorial Guinea for convening a debate on this important subject and by welcoming His Excellency Mr. Simeon Oyono Esono Angue, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea. Your presence, Sir, has certainly set the tone for today's important discussion. I would also like to thank Executive Director Fedotov and Mrs. Ukonga for their presentations.

As the largest archipelagic State in the world, with 17,504 islands and strategically positioned between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Indonesia knows full-well that there is no substitute for a strong policy and swift enforcement response to any threat or act that endangers the safety and security of its maritime domains. We believe that transnational organized crimes, wherever they are committed, may constitute a threat to peace and security, and therefore need to be comprehensively and collectively addressed by the international community. The detrimental impacts of transnational organized crimes are neither isolated nor local, but are increasingly regional and global in nature. The groups behind such crimes do not operate solely in countries with weak law enforcement or governance capacity. They also take advantage of the finer features of the global economy, such as banking, trade and communication networks, in order to fully expand the scope their criminal activities. Technology has made criminals more elusive. With regard to today's debate, the Indonesian delegation would like to highlight the following points.

First, we need a better understanding of the nature and threat of transnational organized crimes, as well as of their implications for international peace and security. The 2010 report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) entitled *The Globalization of Crime* noted a lack of available information regarding transnational criminal markets and trends.

Now, nearly 10 years after the report was published, it is important for the Security Council to consider all options available in order to understand the threats posed by transnational organized crime, particularly in relation to threats of crime at sea. In that regard, the Council may consider asking the Secretariat to prepare a report identifying options to enhance cooperation and coordination and make recommendations to better prevent and counter transnational organized crimes at sea, within the applicable legal framework, and report to the Council on it regularly.

Secondly, Indonesia believes that national prosecutorial and enforcement capability should be strengthened. Almost every stage in the activities of transnational organized crime at sea — from the planning, execution and financial flows to the keeping of the proceeds of crimes — could happen in different jurisdictions simultaneously. Therefore, Member States need to enhance their legal regime to enable effective international cooperation in the field, such as extradition, mutual legal assistance and joint investigations. Jurisdiction should be a bridge, not a barrier, to ensuring that wrong is redressed and justice is ensured. Where the crimes occur beyond any national jurisdiction, States are encouraged to resort to joint or coordinated maritime operations to curb such crimes, while observing the law of the sea.

Thirdly, Indonesia also strongly advocates the critical role of regional mechanisms as first responders to transnational organized crimes at sea. Numerous mechanisms have been established in the Asia-Pacific region to address the scourge of transnational organized crime, among which is the Malacca Strait Patrols by Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. In addition, the Trilateral Patrol was initiated in 2016 by Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines to counter and address maritime crimes in the Sulu Sea. Such cooperation envisages a coordinated naval patrol to secure the important Sulu-Celebes maritime trade routes. We also believe that everyone should be involved in the discourse on maritime security and be supported by the efforts made under the auspices of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Maritime Forum, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the Indian Ocean Rim Association and others. International organizations such as the International Maritime Organization and the International Labour Organization should also support regional efforts.

Fourthly, Indonesia would also like to mention at today's debate an emerging transnational organized crime, namely, crimes related to fisheries, which entail not only criminal aspects with a transnational dimension but a human rights facet as well. In our experience, many vessels committing crimes related to fisheries are also implicated in human rights violations, particularly the forced labour of trafficked persons. Studies reveal that crimes related to fisheries involve big business players, high-ranking persons, political back-up and massive financial resources. For Indonesia, the issue of illegal, unreported and unregulated fisheries is a crime that needs common action. Crimes related to fisheries threaten not only the economy of the victim countries but also the sustainability of their marine environment. That concern is also highlighted in the 2011 UNODC report. It is high time for the Council to discuss the issue.

Crime at sea is transnational, transboundary and extrajudicial in nature. In the past the sea has been a vast body of water where criminals could be elusive, hiding behind waves and reefs. With the emergence of technology, nowadays criminal ships become a dot on a computer screen and are easily recognized on a satellite map. What is needed now is collective responsibility and a common approach and joint action by nations to fight this centuries-old crime. The Council, in line with its mandate, should be active to ensure peace at sea and that ships sail safely.

**Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru)** (*spoke in Spanish*): We commend Equatorial Guinea for having convened this important debate and welcome your presence here, Mr. Minister. We are also grateful for the presence of the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and of the Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission.

Peru is part of an age-old culture that has always recognized the marine wealth of our coasts. Fishing remains for us an important source of nourishment and development, and we therefore deem of the highest importance the protection and monitoring of maritime spaces. We are seriously concerned about the threat that piracy and armed robbery at sea pose to international navigation, security and economic growth, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea, as well as to the security and well-being of seafarers.

We would therefore stress the importance of taking a comprehensive approach, led by the countries

of the region, to fighting crime, which must include addressing the root causes of such threats. This is particularly urgent in an increasingly interdependent world in which 90 per cent of global trade takes place by sea.

While the focus of the international community in this field has been on the Horn of Africa and South-East Asia, the Gulf of Guinea has also become a locus of maritime crime and piracy owing to its vast oil and gas resources, as statistics for 2018 show. We condemn the killings, hostage-taking and robberies committed by pirates operating in the Gulf of Guinea and other areas, and we urge the States of the regions affected to cooperate in bringing those responsible to justice and in strengthening judicial systems and judicial cooperation.

We also call on all States and on the private sector to foster fresh synergies, including in the area of the exchange of information and intelligence. We are particularly concerned at the fact that some of the drugs produced in South America and Asia pass through the Gulf of Guinea on their way to European markets. This is also clear evidence of the link between piracy and armed robbery at sea with transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking.

Peru would recall its concern, recognized by the Council in its presidential statement of May last (S/PRST/2018/9), at the relationship between transnational crime and terrorism, which makes it possible for terrorist groups from West Africa and the Sahel region to profit from the income generated by piracy and armed robbery. In that vein, we acknowledge the positive cooperation between UNODC and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and with INTERPOL.

Likewise, we acknowledge the efforts made in the region by the International Maritime Organization and urge it to explore new areas for cooperation and possible synergies in the area of maritime security. We encourage active participation by regional organizations in responding to maritime crime on the basis of applicable international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It is also important to resolve disputes on maritime limits in order to ensure greater stability in the areas concerned.

I wish to conclude by reiterating the primary responsibility of States for eradicating piracy and armed robbery at sea, as well as the key role that the



Organization is called upon to play in supporting national and regional efforts to respond to this threat.

**Mr. Alotaibi** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to welcome you, Mr. President, to New York and to thank you for having convened this meeting. I wish also to thank Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and Mrs. Florentina Adenike Ukonga, Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, for their valuable briefings.

I should like also to congratulate the representative of the People's Republic of China and his friendly country on the occasion of the Chinese New Year.

In our debate today I want to focus on three issues: first, efforts made at the international level; secondly, the ramifications of transnational organized crime; and, thirdly, the importance of international cooperation.

Concerning the first issue, tireless efforts have been made at the international level to protect and preserve the seas. This has included the conclusion of various conventions and the holding of various regional and international conferences such as the ministerial meeting on the Western Indian Ocean in Mauritius in April 2018, which led to the Mauritius Declaration on Maritime Security, and the agreement on the coordination of maritime operations in the Western Indian Ocean. Such regional measures build and promote the international legal framework necessary to guarantee safe shipping, with positive effects on peace, security and cooperation as well as on friendly relations among all nations, as well as on the economic and social advancement of peoples.

The report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea (A/73/368) indicates that 80 per cent of world trade takes place by sea, which is the main means of international trade and a fundamental driver in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Secondly, on the repercussions of transnational organized crime at sea, such a crime constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security. Terrorist groups such as those in the Gulf of Aden, on the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Guinea are involved in many illegal activities, including drug trafficking; weapons-smuggling; migrant-smuggling; trafficking in human beings; piracy and armed robbery; and terrorist activity against vessels at sea and kidnapping for ransom.

The achievement of such illegitimate purposes causes tremendous damage and loss of human life and can also undermine international trade, energy provision and the world economy in general. By way of example, illegal migration at sea today represents one of the greatest challenges to the international community, since it has security and humanitarian dimensions. Statistics provided by the International Organization for Migration indicate that 1,514 people died at sea in the first seven months of 2018 alone. In 2017, 3,140 people lost their lives trying to get to Europe.

In some States, political vacuums and political troubles, as well as economic recession, an increased unemployment rate and poverty, create a fertile breeding ground for increased transnational organized crime and the proliferation of terrorist organizations that commit crimes such as the ones I listed earlier. This also exacerbates the complexity and duration of conflicts. All of this requires that we redouble our international efforts to combat piracy in all of its manifestations in order to maintain energy provision, international trade and shipping.

Article 100 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea stipulates that:

“All States shall cooperate to the fullest possible extent in the repression of piracy on the high seas or in any other place outside the jurisdiction of any State.”

In that regard, we underscore the commitment to implement the measures set out in resolution 2442 (2018), on piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia. That should go hand in hand with national efforts of Member States.

We pay tribute to the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia and to international cooperation undertaken in the framework of the Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, which is affiliated with the Group of Seven; the Economic Community of West African States; and the Economic Community of Central African States in the fight against organized crime.

Thirdly and finally, international cooperation among States and international and regional organizations has become important. It can be undertaken by building State capacity and cooperation among maritime sectors, as well as by implementing and acceding to international conventions and instruments, while enacting legislation to effectively prevent organized

crime. In that regard, I note the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols, and the Arab Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. We appreciate the efforts made by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in undertaking a range of capacity-building activities, including the establishment of maritime departments and appropriate legislative frameworks within its Global Maritime Crime Programme.

We reiterate that transnational organized crime still represents a threat to international peace and security. It is closely connected to terrorism, which requires us to coordinate better, in particular with those countries that suffer from this phenomenon, and to continue providing technical assistance to build the capacities of all affected countries.

**Ms. Wronecka** (Poland): I welcome you to the Chamber, Mr. President. I would also like to thank Equatorial Guinea for convening this timely and important meeting.

I also thank our briefers, Mr. Yury Fedotov and Mrs. Florentina Adenike Ukonga, for their insightful interventions, in particular on the practical steps to tackle the threats arising from transnational organized crime at sea.

Poland recognizes the importance of the seas and oceans for our planet. We stress the need for their sustainable use and we call for respect or, where appropriate, the development of regulatory frameworks, for instance on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction.

Transnational organized crime at sea is recognized as being among the most serious threats to the security, stability and economic activity of numerous coastal States. Maritime threats, which include illegal activities such as piracy and human trafficking, may also impact international peace and security. Moreover, linkages have been identified between criminal groups operating at sea and terrorist groups. We strongly condemn the activity of all such groups and stress the need for a comprehensive response and a concerted effort, both at sea and on land, to tackle them and their root causes. It is to be recognized that they require both building maritime security, relevant legal frameworks and law enforcement capacities and creating conditions for sustainable prosperity.

We welcome the national, regional and international initiatives to these aims, including those

taken, for example, by the United Nations Development Programme, the International Maritime Organization and Interpol, and in the framework of the Global Maritime Crime Programme of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). We also commend the involvement of the private sector and civil society, and encourage all stakeholders to develop their cooperation and raise its efficiency further.

Poland actively contributes to maritime safety and security, including to the fight against transnational organized crime, which corresponds with one of the priorities of Poland's Security Council membership — namely, the strengthening of respect for international law and the guiding principles of our term: solidarity, responsibility and commitment. We do so not only in the Baltic Sea to our north. Recognizing the challenges and the role that regional organizations, including the European Union (EU), have to play in the Mediterranean Sea, we contribute, for instance, assets to the EUNAVFOR Med Operation Sophia.

Poland notes with satisfaction the EU Naval Force Operation ATALANTA and Combined Maritime Forces operations, as well as the contributions of individual States and regional actors to maritime security in the Horn of Africa region. Additionally, the relevant activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, the EU capacity-building mission Somalia, the African Union Mission in Somalia and particularly the UNODC Maritime Crime Programme for the Horn of Africa should be recognized. Welcoming all endeavours aimed at strengthening security in the region, we encourage their even closer coordination, including through information exchange, joint operations and increased legal cooperation.

The collective and coordinated efforts of the countries of the Gulf of Guinea region, the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States under the regional maritime architecture, as well as their cooperation with other partners, including UNODC, also merit recognition and continuation. Developing legal instruments and institutions and maritime law enforcement operational capabilities, and strengthening international cooperation in other regions, including in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, as well as in the Caribbean, should be continued as well.

Poland encourages States that are not parties to relevant international instruments on combatting piracy

and organized crime at sea to consider acceding to them. In this regard, the special role of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, also known as the “Constitution of the Oceans”, should be highlighted. We stress that all efforts in fighting maritime crime should be consistent with applicable international law, including the law of the sea, international human rights law and relevant Security Council resolutions.

Poland also endorses the wider use of tools and assistance in combatting maritime crime, available from UNODC, among others. The mobilization of efforts in preventing and disrupting such crime is crucial to ensuring freedom of navigation, the rule of law and the sustainable use of the seas and oceans. We encourage and look forward to their further advancement and remain committed to contributing to it.

**Mr. Nkosi** (South Africa): Allow me to join previous speakers in expressing our deepest gratitude to the fraternal Republic of Equatorial Guinea for convening this important debate on transnational organized crime at sea, which poses a great threat to international peace and security. We also take this opportunity to welcome you, Sir, to New York and to thank you for the brilliant and wise manner in which you are presiding over our proceedings this morning.

I wish to express our gratitude to the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Mr Yury Fedotov, and to our dear sister, the Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, Mrs. Florentina Adenike Ukonga, for their extremely useful, comprehensive and informative briefings on the subject under discussion.

South Africa, as the Council is aware, is a maritime country with more than 2,800 kilometres of coastline and an exclusive economic zone of 1.54 million square kilometres straddling both the Indian and Atlantic oceans that is larger than our land area of 1.2 million square kilometres. It is estimated that there are 580 ships in South African waters every day, and more than 11,000 ships dock in our ports every year. South Africa therefore continues to be concerned about the prevalence of transnational organized crime at sea. Africa is very conscious of the impact of these insidious activities on the stability, security and development of both coastal and inland countries. In many instances, the effects of such transnational organized crime fuel conflicts on the continent. The proceeds from those crimes contribute to the proliferation of small arms

and light weapons, protracted conflicts, trafficking in drugs and humans, terrorism, money-laundering and increased mercenary activity. In the past few years South African security and coastal patrols have confiscated numerous vessels and arrested countless people involved in illegal fishing and abalone poaching in our waters, which deprive South Africans of millions of dollars of revenue and have a negative effect on the livelihoods of our coastal communities.

The link between transnational organized crime at sea and the threat that it poses to the stability, security and economies of both coastal and landlocked States is visible and a matter of grave concern. In order to meet the challenges posed by this large-scale phenomenon, it is crucial that we develop a robust regulatory framework and a coordinated and comprehensive approach at the national, regional and international levels to address it. South Africa welcomed the Council’s adoption of resolutions 2383 (2017) and 2442 (2018), which we believe will make a major contribution to dealing with the challenge of transnational organized crime at sea, specifically off the coast of Somalia and the affected coastal areas in the Gulf of Guinea. They embody some of the important steps that the international community should take to prevent and counteract maritime crimes and maintain international peace and security.

In 2014, the African Union (AU) adopted 2050 Africa’s Integrated Maritime Strategy (2050 AIM Strategy), which identifies threats and vulnerabilities that could fuel violence and insecurity on the African continent. Those threats include transnational organized crime in the maritime domain, which covers illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, money-laundering, trafficking in illegal arms and drugs, piracy and armed robbery at sea, illegal oil bunkering and human trafficking. Through the 2050 AIM Strategy, the AU seeks to rally its member States in a coordinated and collaborative partnership that will foster wealth creation in a safe and secure African maritime domain, thereby contributing to the continent’s socioeconomic development.

Furthermore, in 2016 the AU adopted the African Charter on Maritime Security, Safety and Development, known as the Lomé Charter, developed to operationalize the security and developmental aspects articulated in the 2050 AIM Strategy and the AU’s Agenda 2063. It provides general rules and principles for regulating navigational security and combating piracy and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities, as

well as for preserving marine life and biodiversity. It includes provisions for enhancing areas of economic development through ocean-economy activities and cooperation in the use of oceanic riches at the level of exclusive economic zones and international waters. It should also be noted that the AU declared the period from 2015 to 2025 to be the Decade of African Seas and Oceans, with the strategic goal of improving maritime conditions to ensure the protection and sustainable use of the seas and oceans of Africa.

South Africa has worked together with fellow African countries in developing those key continental instruments, which seek to create an ocean environment that is safe, secure and environmentally sustainable for the benefit of the peoples of Africa. In cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Governments of Mozambique, Tanzania and South Africa have entered into a trilateral agreement to counter drug trafficking on maritime routes in the Indian Ocean that seeks to intensify maritime-surveillance capability and the detection of illicit trafficking in the Indian Ocean, as well as to enhance security at ports and other points of entry in the region.

In addition to those initiatives on the African continent, South Africa is currently Chair of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), which was established in 1995 and consists of 21 Indian Ocean-rim countries straddling the continents of Africa, Asia and Australasia. IORA recognizes that the ocean economy is emerging globally as a common and critical source of growth, innovation and employment creation owing to its enormous economic potential, and it has therefore identified maritime security and safety as two of its priorities. At the domestic level, South Africa has identified marine protection and governance as a top priority of our ocean economy strategy, known as Operation Phakisa, which means “make haste”, underlining the importance that our Government attaches to this important area of human endeavour. South Africa believes that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea outlines a comprehensive legal framework applicable to piracy and armed robbery at sea. Our current efforts to combat transnational organized crime at sea must be fully consistent with that international legal framework.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my Government’s support for the call to strengthen the capacity of Member States’ maritime security to enforce international maritime law. In that regard, the

importance of exchanging evidence and information for anti-piracy law-enforcement purposes, as well as sharing lessons learned and best practices among States and international and regional organizations, is imperative, and should ensure that the necessary structures remain dynamic and that the relevant structures, strategies and programmes are adapted to align with prevailing shifts in global trends.

We wish to reiterate that transnational organized crime at sea is linked to insecurity on land. It is only through concerted, holistic and comprehensive action, both on land and at sea, that we will be able to fight that scourge.

**Ms. Pierce** (United Kingdom): I welcome you to New York, Mr. President, and thank you very much for being with us today, as well as for picking this important topic, which, as I think you have heard from all the speakers, in particular from our last speaker, has very particular resonance for a very large number of countries. Many thanks as well to Mr. Fedotov and Mrs. Ukonga for their briefings, which we appreciate.

The United Kingdom welcomes this discussion. We take this extremely seriously. We want to support the region in being able to overcome the problems, and we ourselves participate in various international operations to help eradicate the problem, especially with regard to piracy — but, of course, that is not the only problem, as the last speaker set out. We are strong supporters of resolution 2039 (2012). I would like to agree with what the Chinese Ambassador said about how piracy and maritime crime retards development. I therefore think that it is important to recognize that it is not just crime at sea, but it also robs people living on land. We should keep that in mind.

I wanted to highlight as well the effect that those crimes have on global trade with West Africa. International trade is critical to many African economies. Over 90 per cent of imports and exports are conducted by sea. Safe and secure maritime transport is therefore obviously key to successful trade and growth in Africa, and it is fundamental to the sustainable development of African States’ economies. I just want to highlight that.

I also want to pay tribute to the efforts of States in the region, particularly your country, Mr. President, Equatorial Guinea, for everything you have done to shine a light on these issues and secure regional cooperation. I thought that the statistics that the South

African representative gave us were very fundamental. It was interesting to hear what a priority that is for the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

For our part, the United Kingdom wants to support the region and share its expertise. We and the French have a maritime-domain-awareness-for-trade mechanism that can alert ships and seafarers of the threat from maritime crime. It can also inform those able to respond to the threat that an incident is occurring. We are continuing to develop with the French a website that enables industry to access information on threats in the Gulf of Guinea, and we hope that it will be published soon. We are therefore trying, on a practical basis, to help the region deal with this important problem.

We were very interested in the Yaoundé Code of Conduct and the international audit that took place in Cameroon last month, which we understand that it will be published soon. We await its recommendations. We also would like to work even more closely as international partners with States of the region to build indigenous capability to address maritime crime. The United Kingdom is working with Nigeria to improve civilian capacity in the Nigerian justice system from the point of arrest to prosecution, so that we can increase convictions and help create a deterrent.

The United Kingdom will continue to play a part in supporting activity against maritime crime in the Gulf of Guinea and around the globe. We will continue to provide direct assistance through the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Maritime Organization, as well as directly support regional partners.

A number of speakers today drew attention to the root causes of piracy and maritime crime. That shows what happens when peace, security and prosperity are replaced with criminology, conflict and instability. I therefore want to pledge again today that, as well as focusing on the threat at sea, the United Kingdom will continue to work with partners to tackle the land-based root causes and ensure that development and security policies are coherent and mutually reinforcing.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

**Mr. Bessho** (Japan): I thank you, Mr. President for convening today's important debate and presiding over it. Japan is honoured to speak at the Security Council

on this very important topic. I would also like to thank the briefers for their valuable inputs.

We have a national holiday in Japan, held in July, called Marine Day, to give thanks for the ocean's blessing. As a country that conducts 99.6 per cent of its international trade volume on maritime transportation, Japan takes the issue of maritime security very seriously. We believe that peaceful seas governed by the rule of law bring prosperity for all. Today, however, many waters of the world face the destructive consequences of transnational organized crime. Japan believes that a free and open maritime order constitutes a cornerstone of international stability and prosperity. Our anti-maritime crime efforts are part of our free and open Indo-Pacific initiative to ensure open sea lanes and enhance connectivity between Asia and Africa.

Japan led the way in founding the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia, which has successfully reduced piracy in Asia over the past decade. We have also sent Japan Self-Defense Forces and the Japan Coast Guard to join the multinational effort to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden. In addition, we have contributed to capacity-building to tackle maritime crime through the Global Maritime Crime Programme of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Those undertakings have helped secure some of the world's most vital shipping lanes, and they prove that international cooperation against maritime crime can work.

Despite those successes, however, the issue of transnational organized crime at sea remains a concern. That is especially the case in the Gulf of Guinea, which has seen rising piracy and armed robbery in recent years. Mounting an effective response to that threat will require both a strategic and a comprehensive approach. It must be strategic, using multi-layered cooperation at the national, regional and international levels. Countries need to strengthen their national institutional capacity, while collaborating with their neighbours, regional organizations and the United Nations to build an effective maritime governance system through harmonized legal frameworks and improved information exchange. Japan will continue to play a constructive role. It must also be comprehensive by empowering individuals and communities in addition to ensuring maritime governance.

Ultimately, however, we must tackle the overarching cause of maritime insecurity, namely, poverty. Poverty provides a fertile environment for organized crime, and poverty drives desperate people to take desperate measures. What pushes a young person to take extraordinary risks every day to produce illegal kerosene to sell on the black market, or to hijack a tanker and take hostages for ransom? Poverty and a lack of opportunity do.

Therefore, to uproot criminal networks, the perspective of the individual in their local context needs to be considered. United Nations sustaining peace initiatives, including those by the Peacebuilding Commission, can be leveraged to that end. Such a holistic approach will also help promote a blue economy. In that regard, we are encouraged by recent efforts by some African countries to reduce marine plastic waste, which can help protect fisheries and livelihoods and ensure the sustainable use of marine resources.

Let me conclude by underscoring the importance of prevention in maritime security. Transnational organized crime can exacerbate existing problems and set off a vicious cycle, but successful prevention can help start a virtuous one. A strategic and comprehensive approach will allow us to ensure both secured sea lanes and environmentally sustainable economies, while providing prosperity, security and opportunity for generations to come.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Senegal.

**Mr. Niang** (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you personally, as well as the Government of Equatorial Guinea, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and to welcome the organization of this high-level debate on transnational organized crime at sea as a threat to international peace and security. This is an issue of crucial importance for African countries in particular.

Allow me also to thank the briefers for their informative statements, namely, Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and Mrs. Florentina Adenike Ukonga, Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission.

Crime at sea was once linked to control over the oceans and naval power games, but today it is a multi-faceted scourge involving terrorism, illegal,

unreported and unregulated fishing, illegal migration, piracy, armed robbery against ships, arms trafficking, human trafficking, smuggling, environmental and ecological threats and many other ills. Consequently, transnational organized crime at sea is one of the most serious threats to international security and global economic stability. This shows the relevance of today's debate, which challenges us to analyse the root causes, the means of prevention and the mechanisms to effectively combat this scourge.

Our common commitment to the security of maritime spaces must be commensurate with the crucial challenges that the sea represents in achieving peace and sustainable economic development, in particular for developing countries. That is why we need to demonstrate constant political will and tireless determination.

For its part, in accordance with its international commitments and aware of its maritime vocation, Senegal has set up a framework for coordinating State action at sea to effectively combat maritime crime in all its forms and manifestations. The Government of Senegal has taken an inclusive and participatory approach and put in place an institutional coordination architecture based on a national maritime security system and a national maritime emergency response plan. Those instruments make it possible to plan, organize and coordinate State action to better prevent and stop of criminal activities at sea, in accordance with the provisions of international maritime conventions. The relevance of such a mechanism means that it is cited as a reference within the international maritime community.

In addition to those institutional measures, our country has adopted a relevant legal framework through various instruments, such as the criminal code, the criminal procedure code, the Code of Conduct for the Merchant Navy and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, all of which are aimed at effectively punishing various criminal acts at sea.

Senegal has also significantly strengthened its coastal surveillance capacity by equipping its naval forces with new vessels and aircraft to better secure waters under its national jurisdiction and to fight, in particular, against illegal fishing.

Despite all those efforts, we must recognize that countering maritime crime through national legislation is not an easy task. Although we have at our disposal

several complex legal instruments, controlling this phenomenon is not easy, including for the agents responsible for combating these offences. The situation also raises the delicate question of the integration into national legislation of the legal instruments adopted by the United Nations in order to effectively prevent and stop illicit acts committed in both international and national waters. We therefore strongly call for the strengthening of technical cooperation on the ground to build the capacity of Member States to effectively combat crime at sea in all its forms and manifestations. At the same time, we must promote direct communication between administrations and harmonize texts and laws to ensure a consistent legal framework.

The challenges in the fight against organized crime at sea are enormous. No State alone can address them effectively. A correct understanding of the issues requires more action by the international community to develop and strengthen consultation frameworks in order to better coordinate action and, above all, anticipate the problems related to these phenomena. We must therefore welcome the continued mobilization of States and subregional organizations, in particular in Africa, which have made substantial progress in institution-building and the adoption of legal frameworks to ensure maritime security and safety architecture.

For example, in response to the increasingly complex crime in the Gulf of Guinea, the Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea was held in Yaoundé in 2013, which represented a manifestation of the collective commitment of the States in the region. In view of the progress made since then, with the operationalization, in 2016, of the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, which adopted a four-year programme for 2017-2021, we should welcome the efforts made in this area.

We must also welcome the adoption, on 15 October 2016 in Lomé at the Extraordinary Summit of the African Union, of the African Charter on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa, the Lomé Charter, which is in line with the 2050 Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy for the seas and oceans, which aims to make maritime space one of the main drivers of Africa's economic and social development.

Let us never forget that the main causes of maritime insecurity are to be found on land, namely, the vast

networks of illicit activities that are progressively being built on a foundation of poor governance, extreme poverty and socio-political violence. We must vigorously combat criminal and terrorist groups, without forgetting to address the deep-rooted causes that give rise to their activities. In that regard, among other things, it is essential to strengthen partnerships to make rational use of fisheries resources and to have better governance and sharing of transnational marine resources.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

**Mr. Perera** (Sri Lanka): Let me begin by congratulating Equatorial Guinea on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and for organizing this debate on one of the most immediate threats to international peace and security — transnational organized crime at sea. We also thank Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and Mrs. Ukonga, Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, for their informative briefings earlier this morning.

In June last year, Sri Lanka was pleased to participate at the ministerial level in the successful Arria formula meeting on maritime crime as a threat to international peace and security, which, Mr. President, your country, along with Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, the Netherlands, the United States and UNODC, hosted and which provided an excellent forum to highlight the emerging threats posed by maritime crime.

As an island nation strategically located in the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka is well aware of the importance of creating a maritime order that can withstand the emerging threats from transnational criminal acts. With its sea lanes serving as major arteries of East-West trade, the Indian Ocean carries approximately half the world's container shipping and about two thirds of its oil shipments. Heavy tanker traffic between the Middle East and the Far East passes in close proximity to the southern coast of Sri Lanka. Therefore, ensuring security and stability and maintaining freedom of navigation in the sea lanes of communication of the Indian Ocean are of vital concern to Sri Lanka and of importance not only to the global economy but also to global security.

Increased mobility at sea and heavy traffic open up opportunities for drug trafficking, the illegal arms

trade, migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons, among others. Furthermore, it can give rise to a plethora of corrupt practices, including illegal and unreported fishing, bottom trawling, environmental degradation and the destruction of coastal infrastructure. For Sri Lanka, with its existence so inextricably linked to the ocean and its resources, the impact of such actions would be enormously detrimental to our very survival. In addition, UNODC has highlighted a range of new threats and crimes, including intentional damage to fibre-optic submarine cables, and legal issues arising from floating armouries, among several others.

Littoral States such as Sri Lanka are at the forefront of the fight against drug trafficking through maritime routes. The use of the Indian Ocean as a major drug trafficking highway poses a threat to maritime security and maritime law enforcement. One of the major challenges is the lack of a legal conclusion, such as prosecution, for the majority of drug seizures made within international waters in the Indian Ocean region.

Sri Lanka has historically been a champion of a rules-based order for the maritime domain. In 1973, we chaired the historic third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, which led to the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea — a comprehensive constitution for the oceans. For those reasons, and recognizing the unique nature of the high seas, which fall outside the jurisdictional domain of a single State, Sri Lanka calls most emphatically for concerted and collective international cooperative measures to provide the requisite regulatory framework to counter such threats. Given the nature of the current challenges, such crimes must not be allowed to fall into an area where there is a legal vacuum.

In that context, it is also relevant to mention that in October last year Sri Lanka organized an international conference entitled “The Indian Ocean — Defining our Future”, where Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe addressed two core issues related to the Indian Ocean, namely, freedom of navigation and freedom of digital connectivity. While the former is absolutely vital, the safeguarding of the freedom of digital connectivity is of equal importance, especially given the rapid increase in technology and the fact that the presence of undersea cables has grown exponentially in the past few decades. It is known that more than 80 per cent of Internet traffic is transferred using undersea cables. Internet connectivity is inextricably linked to the economies

of most countries, and the seabed is fast becoming a tangle of ungoverned undersea cables.

That aspect presents a new threat to international peace and security. Although the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea deals with submarine cables and provides a basic framework, nevertheless, new threats have emerged since then. In recognition of that, on 11 December 2018, through resolution 73/124, on oceans and the law of the sea, which Sri Lanka co-sponsored together with a large number of other States, the General Assembly addressed the issue of fibre-optic submarine cables and their susceptibility to intentional and/or accidental damage.

Consequent to that General Assembly resolution, last week the UNODC Global Maritime Crime Programme held an event in Colombo, Sri Lanka, for legal experts, which was followed by a high-level ministerial meeting on the existing legal regime governing fibre-optic submarine cables. In a world that is now heavily reliant on connectivity for everything, from military operations and flight reservations to basic navigation, a damaged or destroyed cable can have a tremendous impact on all aspects of life. Some examples of the vulnerability of those cables and how all States are reliant on submarine cables were highlighted at the meeting in Colombo.

Sri Lanka therefore fully endorses the recommendations put forward by UNODC to address that new threat in order to support all States, namely, classifying submarine cables as critical communications infrastructure and/or critical national infrastructure, developing a national action plan for resilience in addressing the protection of submarine cables, enhancing the legal treatment of submarine cables in line with public international law and encouraging States to designate a lead agency on the protection of submarine cables.

To that end, Sri Lanka encourages the exploration of mutual assistance at the international and regional levels for resilience in the face of interference with submarine cables and the harmonization of laws on the protection of submarine cables, including cooperative law enforcement initiatives for their protection.

In conclusion, we need to encourage greater dialogue and cooperation among all States in assessing the security imperatives, threats, vulnerabilities and responsibilities given the increase in undersea cables on the seabed. As a State strategically located in the Indian Ocean, much of the digital connectivity between the



East and the West traverses over the seabed adjacent to Sri Lanka. We therefore call for immediate international action in seeking urgent measures to address that new and imminent threat.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

**Ms. Juul** (Norway): I commend you, Mr. President, for including this matter on the Security Council agenda.

As a country with a long coastline and a large maritime sector, Norway is concerned that piracy, fisheries crime and trafficking in people, drugs, weapons and protected species are threatening the legitimate use of the oceans. The livelihoods and security of coastal communities are at stake. Enhanced global and regional cooperation is required. Coastal States must govern their territorial waters and their exclusive economic zones to the best of their abilities.

The Gulf of Guinea is among the areas where maritime security is a challenge. The members of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Economic Community of West African States took an important decision in 2013 when they adopted the Code of Conduct concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa. Norway remains a committed partner in support of the implementation of the Code.

The Western Indian Ocean was the area most affected by piracy until 2012. The Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia was able to curb those activities through a series of coordinated measures. However, pirates continue to test our readiness. The situation in West and East Africa differ, but both require a viable legal solution. In our view, it is particularly important to prosecute the men in Somalia who organize piracy groups. Norway supports the efforts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to assist countries in drafting anti-piracy legislation. I commend the countries that have acquired the legal instruments necessary to prosecute pirates who are arrested outside their territorial waters. Kenya, Mauritius, Seychelles and Togo are among those countries.

Another of Norway's priorities is to assist our multilateral partners in the fight against maritime piracy. One example is our active support to INTERPOL, deploying police officers to Seychelles for a period of four years. Building up local, sustainable

police is a consistent way to prevent transnational organized crime.

Fisheries crime poses a threat to the world's fisheries resources and to economic development. Around 20 per cent of the fish on the market is caught illegally. Developing countries, and particularly small island States, are hardest hit. As a country that relies heavily on a sustainable blue economy, Norway has long advocated increased international cooperation and an effective legal framework to fight that type of crime. Norway provides substantial support to a number of projects to combat fisheries crime.

The Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing includes effective measures and places special emphasis on capacity-building in developing countries to enhance their efforts to implement the agreement. Norway has allocated almost \$5 million in funding for UNODC efforts to combat fisheries crime, as well as significant resources, in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, to fight illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing.

We call upon States that have not yet done so to become parties to relevant international instruments for combating organized crime at sea, including the protocols supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and to take measures to ensure their implementation.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Ms. Beckles** (Trinidad and Tobago): Allow me to first congratulate Equatorial Guinea on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and to commend you, Sir, for your leadership of this initiative to address transnational crime at sea as a threat to international peace and development. Trinidad and Tobago appreciates the opportunity to address the Council, as we view today's debate as a means to further strengthen multilateralism, which is a most crucial vehicle for resolving the peace and security challenges we face.

Allow me to also express my delegation's appreciation to Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and Mrs. Florentina Adenike Ukonga, Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, for their informative briefings, which allow us to

frame our discussion around organized crime at sea as a multifaceted problem involving many criminal activities and many practical difficulties for States, as well as regional and international bodies.

Transnational organized crime and its global networks pose a daunting challenge to the security of all States. It attacks the functioning of State institutions, intensifies vulnerabilities to governance, fosters instability and, in doing so, undermines the fundamental premise of our democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights and efforts towards sustainable development.

Trinidad and Tobago are the southernmost islands of the Lesser Antilles and located just 11 kilometres off the South American continent. As a small island developing State, Trinidad and Tobago comprises an area of only 4,828 square miles. Yet, our marine space is 15 times larger than our land. That geographical location, large marine space and porous borders have rendered Trinidad and Tobago an easy conduit for the transshipment between the major sources and destinations of illicit drugs and the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons, often trafficked through maritime domains.

Trafficking in illicit drugs and the illegal trade in small arms and ammunition wreak havoc on the economic, social and development fabric of Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean. Furthermore, we must also remain vigilant to ensure that crimes such as piracy, human trafficking, illegal fishing, trafficking in cultural property, wildlife smuggling and pollution of the marine environment are also combated and prosecuted wherever they occur. In doing so, however, we are compelled to divert resources from vital development activities, such as education, health care and infrastructure development. Therefore, such security challenges place an added burden on the small and vulnerable societies of island States, such as Trinidad and Tobago.

Notwithstanding that challenge, Mr. President, you may rest assured that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago will not be a bystander to these destabilizing pressures. Rather, we accept our responsibility to meet our obligations, both domestic and international, and will continue to join multilateral efforts aimed at combating threats to peace and security.

The effective repression of transnational organized crime at sea requires a robust system of adequate and

precise bilateral and multilateral instruments. Given the destructive impact of illegal small arms and light weapons in our communities, Trinidad and Tobago reaffirms its belief that the Arms Trade Treaty, if implemented in good faith, could significantly reduce human suffering caused by the illegal and irresponsible transfer of arms and improve regional security and stability.

Furthermore, as a State party to the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols, as well as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Trinidad and Tobago has adopted and continues to implement a multifaceted approach to tackling the issue, relying not only on law enforcement but also on strategic interventions through cooperation with regional and international partners, including the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In keeping with the CARICOM Strategic Plan for 2015-2019, Trinidad and Tobago has continued its unwavering efforts to counter transnational organized crime and its illegal activities. Through its support of the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security, the region is focusing on deepening its crime prevention initiatives, facilitating justice reform, strengthening regional security systems and enhancing maritime and airspace awareness.

Trinidad and Tobago is also working closely with its development partners in the areas of information-sharing, capacity-building and technical assistance. Transnational crime is a common and shared responsibility and, therefore, collaborative partnerships will continue to support efforts to strategically disrupt transnational crime and bolster the capacity of developing countries to enhance the safety of their citizens and the security of their borders, while reducing the negative impact of crime at sea, as well as on land.

Given what I have said, the challenge of transnational organized crime at sea has to be addressed on different fronts in a coordinated manner. With regard to the legal framework, it is important to identify gaps that exist and promote the ratification of existing multilateral treaties concerning transnational crime and the harmonization of domestic legislation to ensure that States parties can fully and effectively assume their responsibilities and obligations under international law. Further, there

is a need for a deeper analysis and understanding of this problem and its impact on small island developing States, given the acute vulnerabilities that countries such as my own face.

In order to achieve that, we must focus on capacity-building for enforcement and prosecution with regard to international law, as well as on developing partnerships for best practices in arresting and detaining suspected offenders and protecting victims. As stated before, that will require domestic, inter-agency, regional and international intelligence and information-sharing. In that regard, Trinidad and Tobago underscores the need for regional and international agencies and bodies, including UNODC, to be provided with adequate, predictable and reliable resources to enable them to effectively undertake activities within their mandates.

Lastly, women and girls remain most vulnerable to migrant smuggling and human trafficking through maritime channels. Therefore, it is imperative that a gender perspective be mainstreamed into efforts to address transnational crime at sea in ways that foster the empowerment of women and place them in decision-making processes for the maintenance of peace and security. It is in that conviction that Trinidad and Tobago first introduced the resolution on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control in 2010 (resolution 65/69), as a means to promote the crucial role of women in countering crime and violence. Gender is an undeniable factor in peace and security.

In conclusion, Trinidad and Tobago constantly strives to devise solutions to peace and security challenges, including transnational organized crime at sea. We remain committed to working with our international partners and will continue to press for more effective measures to curb the flow of organized criminal activity within the Caribbean with a view to achieving long-lasting peace and the safety of our societies.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

**Mr. Stefanile** (Italy): We would like to express our appreciation, Mr. President, for your decision to hold a debate today, at the beginning of your presidency, on a very relevant issue pertaining to international peace and security. We also thank the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission for their briefings.

Transnational organized crime at sea is a serious threat to international security, and international and regional cooperation are indispensable to tackling this scourge in all its dimensions, including the trafficking of persons, weapons, drugs and cultural artefacts. Maritime security is a priority interest for Italy and we are deeply involved in fostering security and supporting the development of related capabilities of partner countries, particularly in Africa.

There is indeed a need for comprehensive capacity-building assistance to African countries in areas such as maritime governance, coast guard authorities and functions, disaster relief, maritime search and rescue, and maritime information sharing and integration. At the same time, efforts are required to improve legislative, judicial and prosecutorial capacities. The development of a sustainable maritime economy is also essential in order to effectively counter transnational organized crime at sea.

Among the various forms of organized crime at sea, the trafficking of persons is a particularly heinous crime that the entire international community is called on to fight against. In line with resolution 2388 (2017), among others, we need all countries to work together at the bilateral and multilateral levels with a view to disrupting criminal networks that take advantage of migrants; promoting development and capacity-building in countries of departure and transit; addressing the root causes, thereby preventing the smuggling of migrants and the trafficking of persons at sea; and creating sustainable mechanisms to ensure a much-needed shared responsibility among countries receiving migrants.

That is what Italy has done in the past two years through its Africa Fund, from which considerable resources have been used to assist African countries in dealing with migration flows, taking a three-pronged approach: first, financing the work of international organizations, such as the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in transit countries in order to improve conditions for migrants; secondly, cooperating with countries of departure and transit to build the institutional capacities needed to disrupt criminal networks and provide assistance to migrants; and thirdly, increasing development cooperation activities in countries of departure and transit so that the root causes of migration can be effectively addressed.

At the multilateral level, Italy continues to lead EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia and is one of the largest contributors to the European Union-Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund. By pooling together financial resources and initiatives from all member States of the European Union (EU), the EU has proven how effective its shared activities can be in building robust regional institutions and multi-agency capacity that can guarantee security at sea and the rule of law.

Italy also actively participates in important counter-piracy operations. In the Horn of Africa, we have been participating in EUNAVFOR Operation Atalanta since its inception, continuously providing one or two naval assets, including the flagship. Italy remains committed to Somalia's institution-building process in an effort to address the root causes of piracy off of its coasts, including through the contribution to the European Union Training Mission in Somalia and the European Union Capacity-Building Mission in Somalia.

In the Gulf of Guinea, the recent activity of an Italian Navy ship announced the start of new capacity-building and cooperation programme with the national authorities from within the region. I also note the two meetings of the Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea that the Italian Group of Seven presidency organized in 2017 in Rome and Lagos, as well as our support for the Luanda Declaration on Peace and Security in the Gulf of Guinea Region.

In conclusion, I stress Italy's commitment to working together with its partners, especially African countries, in fighting transnational organized crime at sea and tackling its root causes. At the same time, we deem it essential to fully respect and encourage local ownership. In that spirit, we stand ready to improve information sharing, increase legal cooperation and cooperate on institution- and capacity-building.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines.

**Mrs. Azucena** (Philippines): I thank you, Mr. President, for inviting the Philippines to participate in this important debate, as this issue is a national security priority for my country.

Due to its strategic location in South-East Asia and its more than 36,000 kilometres of coastline, the Philippines attaches paramount importance to maritime security. The security of the seas surrounding the country impacts our territorial integrity, the protection

of maritime ecosystems and aquatic resources, and the welfare of our nationals. My country's location makes it vulnerable to the activities of international crime syndicates, including piracy, drug trafficking and human trafficking.

The Philippines also has a stake in the security of the seas beyond its surrounding waters. Our seafarers constitute about 20 per cent of global seafarers, servicing mainly international merchant ships. There is one Filipino seafarer for every complement of four on board a vessel at any time. It is therefore vital for my country that threats to maritime security be addressed and abated.

At the height of the piracy in the Horn of Africa in 2008, more than 200 Filipino seafarers were in the hands of pirates on any given day. During the period from March 2006 to March 2009, 293 Filipino seafarers were taken hostage by pirates while working on board seagoing vessels. It was only in October 2016 that the last group of hostages from the last fishing vessel hijacked in the Gulf of Aden was released. Five Filipinos were in that group; they had been held hostage for more than four years.

The Philippines cooperates with the Government of the flag of hijacked vessels, as well as with the vessels' owners, to ensure the safety and return of the abducted crew. In the case of the most recent release and recovery of hostages, the Philippines worked with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in repatriating the Filipinos as well as the Cambodian seafarers and in providing them with medical and psychosocial services. Financial assistance to the families of the released crew was also provided by my Government, in keeping with the third pillar of our foreign policy, to promote and protect the welfare of overseas Filipinos.

Piracy in the Horn of Africa was stemmed by the vigilant and efficient counter-piracy operations and cooperation of many Governments and organizations. However, piracy elsewhere continues. In September last year alone, seven Filipino seafarers were abducted in Nigerian waters. They were released in October, but just a few days after that, 10 others were abducted in the Gulf of Guinea.

The Philippines' southern maritime borders, which are shared with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) neighbours, are areas of concern owing to the prevalence of high-seas piracy, terrorist activities and other crimes. The Philippines joined Indonesia

and Malaysia in the trilateral cooperative agreement to implement counterterrorism measures and strategies and to effectively address existing and emerging transnational challenges and threats. Joint air and sea patrols were conducted on the three countries' common borders to reinforce security and accelerate the capture of armed elements, fugitives and those who are providing assistance to extremists. That cooperation has also enhanced intelligence- and information-sharing among security and intelligence agencies.

The Philippines is also a member of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP), a multilateral mechanism involving 20 States aimed at promoting and enhancing cooperation against piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia. In 2018, the ReCAAP information-sharing centre reported a total of 76 incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia, a 25 per cent decrease from the 102 incidents reported in 2017. The ReCAAP information-sharing centre also conducts capacity-building for the focal points of countries and provides links with the International Maritime Organization, INTERPOL, the Baltic and International Maritime Council and other relevant organizations.

The Philippines is active in the ASEAN Maritime Forum, a mechanism in ASEAN to enhance dialogue and confidence-building in maritime cooperation and maritime security in the region, including in countering piracy, in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and in the management and protection of maritime and

aquatic resources. The expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum, which includes ASEAN dialogue partners, also holds discussions on maritime security, safety and environmental protection. The Philippines is likewise active in the ASEAN Regional Forum and the East Asia Summit, as well as the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime, which focuses on maritime security and cooperation.

Organized crime at sea is a global problem that threatens security, stability and the rule of law, undermines economic prosperity and threatens the environment. Thus international cooperation to prevent and control it is essential. States have a shared responsibility to counter the threat of maritime crime through enhanced international cooperation, awareness-raising, information-sharing, capacity-building, technical assistance and strengthened law enforcement. We call on all Member States to adhere to and implement the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols, the relevant resolutions and guidelines adopted by the International Maritime Organization, and the relevant conventions countering maritime piracy.

In my country's experience, the scourge of piracy and robbery at sea is best addressed by an international response through an intergovernmental approach. With approximately 80 per cent of global trade taking place by maritime transport, attaining maritime security is vital to our shared prosperity.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*