



PROJECT AGWE

WEST AFRICA

ASSISTING AND ENHANCING MARITIME LAW ENFORCEMENT CAPABILITIES IN BENIN, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, GHANA, NIGERIA AND TOGO.

Situation

The Gulf of Guinea is a vital hub for international trade. However, in recent years, this region has become one of the world's major piracy hotspots. Pirate groups kidnapped over 400 seafarers for ransom in the Gulf of Guinea between 2019 and 2023. Additionally, some pirate attacks in the region involve the stealing of oil products, which are later processed and sold on the black market.

Other maritime crimes in the Gulf of Guinea include illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU), trafficking in counterfeit goods, drugs and arms, as well as human trafficking and people smuggling. Terrorist attacks against port infrastructure represent another key risk in the region. All of these security threats have a serious impact on the socio-economic development of both coastal and landlocked regional countries.

Regional collaboration between law enforcement agencies is essential to address these threats and ensure the security of the maritime environment. This need is recognized in United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2634, which urges all UN Member States "to share information with INTERPOL for use in the global piracy database through regional information sharing arrangements."

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Project activities

INTERPOL's Project AGWE enhances maritime law enforcement capabilities in five countries in the Gulf of Guinea – Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo – by linking first responders, investigators and prosecutors, and increasing cross-border collaboration.

Activities under Project AGWE include:

- **Training:** these sessions cover the established international methodologies of investigating and prosecuting maritime piracy and other maritime-based organized crime.
- **Mock crime scenes and trials:** INTERPOL experts create scenarios, based on real cases that occurred in the region, and provide "evidence" for first responders, law enforcement officials and prosecutors to practice the application of the law.
- **Exchange visits, investigative meetings and case coordination meetings:** officials from beneficiary countries work side by side with their colleagues in other countries and discuss cases of common interest or concern.
- **Investigative and analytical support:** project officers and analyst provide hands-on mentorship to local officers to counter any type of crime and terrorism occurring in the maritime domain.

Donor: United States Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL)

Timeframe: 2015-2024 (four phases)

Budget: EUR 8.1 million

Key success:

- Over 1600 officials trained through 78 capacity building activities (from February 2015 to December 2023).
- Beneficiary countries have improved their capabilities to coordinate at the inter-agency level, process a crime scene, and conduct crew interviews.
- Assisted the Nigerian Navy to establish a Maritime Crime Investigation Desk.
- Extended INTERPOL's I24/7 system to maritime units and harbors.
- Supported two successful piracy prosecutions in Togo and in Nigeria, as well as a prosecution of crew members involved in drugs trafficking by sea.
- In cooperation with international partners, facilitated information sharing that resulted in the seizure of 4.7 tons of cocaine in the Gulf of Guinea.
- Organized investigative support meetings that led to the arrest of a high-ranking organized crime group member involved in international drug trafficking by sea affecting West Africa.
- Supported Nigeria and Togo to publish several INTERPOL diffusions and Blue Notices concerning maritime piracy suspects.

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INTERPOL

INTERPOL General Secretariat

Tel: +33 4 72 44 70 00

CT-MTS@interpol.int
www.interpol.int