

Press release

Mauritius and maritime regional centres of Seychelles and Madagascar conduct a simulation exercise

The development of the blue economy requires the control of crimes and incidents at sea, supported by regional cooperation and interagency coordination. In this frame, the EU CRIMARIO project organised a 4-days exercise focused in drug trafficking by sea (26-30 August, Mauritius Coast Guard HQ), involving three groups of players: Mauritius maritime agencies, and the two maritime regional centres (RCOC Mahé, RMIFC Antananarivo).

Olivier Bézier, CRIMARIO Training and Capacity Building component manager, organized and conducted a **Command Post Exercise (CPX) focused in drug trafficking** to the primary benefit of Mauritius with the participation of RMIFC in Antananarivo and RCOC in Mahe. From 26 to 30 August, the teams were given a drug case study in western Indian Ocean, they exchanged information and set up an action plan in response to the threat, by using the IORIS platform as the primary communication tool.

A white cell from the CRIMARIO team was deployed inside the RCOC during the exercise (Guillaume Remusat, from Azimut200) and the exercise was conducted from Mauritius Coast Guard HQ.

The day of the 26th was devoted to final preparation and briefings. The live phase of the exercise took place on the 27th and 28th. During these two "livex" days, the three teams acted as they would do on a real drug situation; they shared messages and reports on vessels, sort out a list of suspects and issued a coordinated action plan that led to the (simulated) interception of a vessel at sea by Mauritian patrol boat and on the ground investigations by Anti-Drug Unit (ADSU) and Customs, with the support of the Maritime Affairs. A practical exercise of ship inspection was conducted in the port of Port Louis by the CGS Valiant patrol crew. The debriefing took place on Thursday 29th, and a final exercise report will be sent to all parties in mid-September.

This exercise, the second of its kind in scale led by CRIMARIO, is spreading the culture of **inter-agency cooperation** and enables the various agencies to fine-tune their common SOPs. In the case of the newly appointed regional centres, it contributes to build their doctrine and SOPs.

Olivier Bézier warmly thanked Captain Manu, Commandant of the Mauritius National Coast Guard, who hosted the exercise's management and provided much appreciated logistical services.

In conclusion CRIMARIO continues to support the efforts of the two regional maritime centres and joint national centres to develop their full operational capacity.

The next major exercise will be Cutlass Express, led by US NAVAF in November 2019. This time, CRIMARIO will integrate the white cell and the whole participants will use IORIS. The **IORIS web-platform**, initiated by CRIMARIO to the benefit of the region, is designed to share maritime information and manage any incident at sea. It is already utilised by the maritime agencies of 5 western Indian Ocean countries.

Why EU CRIMARIO ?

Responding to the challenge, the European Union supported the implementation of a regional mechanism, the **Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC)** - agreed in 2009 by 21 littoral states of the Western IO, amended in January 2017 in Jeddah - and initiated the **Critical Maritime Routes (CMR) programme** and the **EU NAVFOR-Atalanta operation**.

Under CMR, EU CRIMARIO aims to strengthen maritime safety and security in the wider IO region by supporting coastal countries in enhancing maritime situational awareness (MSA). **MSA is the sharing and fusion of data from various sources** to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the maritime domain, whilst an effective and sustainable MSA enables maritime stakeholders to improve security, safety and environment of this domain.

To support this, CRIMARIO introduced various initiatives in the region such as a web based information sharing and incident management platform (**IORIS**), the creation of a national AIS network, training & capacity building, workshops aimed at enhancing interagency and regional cooperation, and will establish a set of standards for information sharing.

The CRIMARIO project, managed by Expertise France and with a budget of €5.5 million, began in January 2015 and will run until December 2019.

More on CRIMARIO activities & IORIS

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Click to see IORIS video on [CRIMARIO Youtube channel](#)

More about RCOC , RMIFC & MASE

Initiated by **MASE** (Maritime security programme, EU-funded), and implemented by IOC, **two regional centres** have been set up to promote maritime situational awareness of the coastal countries of ESA-IO (Eastern and Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean); they were confirmed by the **Djibouti Declaration on Maritime Security and Safety** signed on May 15, 2016 by the Ministers of the ESA-IO region and the signature of information sharing agreements.

The **RCOC** (Regional Coordination Operations Centre) is hosted by Seychelles and the **RMIFC** (Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre) by Madagascar. Each centre has a different but complementary role: RMIFC gathering and analysing data and RCOC coordinating the regional response. Both centres are staffed with seconded liaison officers from the ESA-IO countries.

The MASE programme, EU funded, is coordinated by IGAD in association with EAC, COMESA and IOC (Indian Ocean Commission).

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