



Mr. Alan Cole

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Moderator,
Distinguish Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Executive Director of UNODC, Mr. Yuri Fedotov, let me thank the Sri Lanka Navy and the Government of Sri Lanka for the invitation to UNODC to participate at the 8th Galle Dialogue. It is a great honor to have the opportunity to address this distinguished audience once again.

My name is Alan Cole and I have been running UNODC's Global Maritime Crime Programme since 2009. I was previously a part of the UK Royal Navy and so have been working to tackle issues of maritime crime for nearly 30 years. The topic that I have been asked to address today is the "*Necessity of an all-inclusive strategic approach to counter maritime crimes*". Based on my experience, I would deem this one of the most important conditions of addressing global maritime crime threats – and I shall elaborate on why that is in the coming 15 minutes.

While the Indian Ocean offers immense opportunity in driving forward economic development in littoral states, it is also utilized by criminal networks whose activities threaten

stability in the region. In this regard, I would highlight four key threats which are interlinked and which need to be addressed by Indian Ocean states in a coherent and collaborative manner.

CRIME 1: HEROIN TRAFFICKING IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

As all of you will be aware, the high seas of the Indian Ocean are persistently used for the pursuit of criminal activity. In the last few years, trafficking of Afghan heroin has emerged as one of the most significant maritime crime threats in the Indian Ocean. In the Western Indian Ocean region, the US led Combined Maritime Force (CMF) has seized over 9300kgs of heroin at sea in the last three years. UNODC terms this trafficking route, which involves the movement of drugs by sea from the Makran Coast to East Africa and South Asia, the 'Southern Route'. It is estimated that 30-40% of the heroin production from Afghanistan is trafficked via this Route.

Effects:

- Health
- Corruption
- Terrorism

Governments of the Indian Ocean region must take steps to avert this region from spiraling down the path of violence brought on by drug cartels as seen in other parts of the world. There is therefore a compelling need for all stakeholders in this space to work in a more collaborative approach to maximize the impact of efforts.

In 2016, the GMCP convened a High Level Meeting of Interior Ministers of the Indian Ocean Region which gave rise to the Southern Route Partnership.

This Partnership provides a platform for improved collaboration and coordination of counter narcotics initiatives in the Indian Ocean region and has already proved quite effective in terms of establishing formal and informal interactions between the drug enforcement community of the Indian Ocean Region, and developing practical and operational engagement.

It is the hope of UNODC that this forum will foster the cooperation between Indian Ocean States required to deter drug smuggling networks from using the ocean to their advantage.

CRIME 3: TERRORISM

The threat of terrorism of course exists everywhere but the role of the seas in fueling Terrorism is often overlooked. The seas are both generate revenue for terrorism and they are used to move people and weapons covertly between continents.

As just mentioned in the context of drug smuggling, heroin produced in Afghanistan is trafficked along the Southern Route to Eastern Africa. This is a primary funding source of the Taliban whose operations not only continue to destabilize the AfPak Region – but also the Horn of Africa through this drug trade. It is therefore again worth underlining the vital need to have a clear and concerted regional approach to suppressing the Southern Route.

In this regard, I'd like to highlight an example of a successful intervention through which a similar threat was suppressed.

Al Shabaab's main funding source was for a long time the illegal trade in charcoal from the Horn by sea. This trade enabled the group to retain its stronghold in important port city of Kismayo for many years.

[Story of Indian intervention]

CRIME 2: TRANSNATIONAL ORGANISED CRIME IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY

States in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) rely heavily on the Blue Economy as a source of income, nutrition, employment, and generally a driver of development. Meanwhile, oceans in general offer vast unregulated spaces to hide criminal activities, namely anonymity and freedom from law enforcement. Maritime security and countering maritime crime is therefore a significant concern for countries in this Region.

An issue of concern shared by all WIO States is that of Illegal Unregulated and Unreported Fishing (IUU) which depletes marine resources, threatens fragile ocean life, and deprives states of revenue. Depletion of fish stocks at a global level makes fishing more competitive and thus creates further incentive to engage in IUU to raise profits. IUU is furthermore known to be a gateway crime in the sense that it is often accompanied by other forms of transnational organised crime including tax evasion, bribery, document forgery, money laundering, and pollution as well as more serious offences such as trafficking of people, forced labour, smuggling of weapons, and of course also drugs.

The complex and transnational nature of fisheries crime make prosecution difficult and expensive. Cases of fisheries crime are therefore often closed with administrative penalties only – essentially rendering fisheries crime as a very high profit/low risk enterprise.

The GMCP's views is that enabling better regulation of maritime zones will ultimately allow nations in the Region to make full use of their ocean spaces to drive forward development in a sustainable manner. We run a number of initiatives aimed at achieving this in the Indian Ocean which I will touch on later.

CRIME 4: KIDNAP FOR RANSOM

Going back to the threat of Terrorism at sea, Kidnap for Ransom is an emerging threat which has increasingly close ties to terrorist elements.

Archipelagic Southeast Asia has faced the challenges of terrorism, insurgency and transnational crime in its waters for decades, but in the past year, the situation has deteriorated significantly. Given the geography of this region, the maritime space plays an important role in the conduct of criminal and terrorist activity, particularly in the maritime tri-border area between Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines. There has been a drastic rise in violent cases of piracy and hostage taking off of vessels resulting in death or ransoms paid to criminal and terrorist groups.

Recent terrorist attacks in Indonesia have raised concerns about the internationalization of militant and extremist groups within the region and the growing reach of the so-called Islamic State into Southeast Asia, pointing to the porous maritime borders and ungoverned spaces in the Sulu-Sulawesi and Celebes Seas.

It is estimated that more than 100,000 ships and 18 million passengers pass through the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas every year. This is a historically important maritime trading corridor, well known to be exploited by criminal networks trading in illicit and dangerous goods, trafficking people and smuggling migrants, and committing fuel theft. These maritime crimes are not only at risk of increasing at the hands of opportunistic criminal networks as insecurity looms in the region, but lends to the development of stronger criminal-terrorist groups committing piracy and KFR, benefitting directly from illicit forms of trafficking (using smuggled weapons, internationally smuggled recruits, and stolen fuel, for example) and as sources of funding (through drugs smuggling, for example). These groups are taking advantage of the ungoverned maritime spaces to carry out their activities, undermining the rule of law of these countries and threatening the security and stability of the wider region and to global maritime trade.

I have highlighted four crimes today. I could, however, have talked about a number of other crimes such as trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, weapon smuggling or piracy. Regardless of the crime, the point remains the same: None of these crimes can be tackled in isolation.

As mentioned, drug smuggling is found in the fishing industry. Drug smuggling, in turn, fuels terrorism, and terrorist networks have a found new funding in kidnapping for ransom.

As crimes occurring at sea are interlinked, so must efforts to counter them be.

Also, given the transnational nature of maritime crime, we must build strong cooperation between affected states in order to drive out criminal networks from the Indian Ocean.

What works?

The general approach of the GMCP in tackling maritime crime threats has been an approach which targets the full criminal justice systems readiness to react.

Secondly, it is essential to take an interregional approach which builds networks among criminal justice actors and fosters cooperation.

On the first point, GMCP's approach to MLE training has been one that focuses both on specialised courses, particularly in a regional setting which fosters ties between officers throughout the Region, and day-to-day mentoring to apply skills to daily operations through placement of embedded mentors.

Secondly, GMCP is working with MLE authorities and private sectors to facilitate the application of technological innovations in traditional MLE operations. This is an area that has enormous potential in terms of making operations more targeted and thereby reducing the cost of MLE.

In Sri Lanka, we have had a first trial of planning and executing an interdiction at short

notice using real-time satellite images provided by the EU.

Regional cooperation is of course essential – this cannot be highlighted enough.

One modality for achieving regional cooperation which has proved successful is the Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime. This Forum, which some of you may have attended, has given rise to the Southern Route Partnership and a Prosecutors Network which are serving to target regional and national interventions to address maritime crime both from a law enforcement angle and a prosecutorial one.

Despite facing immense challenges, the Indian Ocean States present a very promising example of pulling together as a region to address shared maritime crime threats.

It is a pleasure to work in this Region and we, needless to say, hope to continue and expand work in this region in the years to come.

In closing, I am pleased to announce that the UNODC Global Maritime Crime Programme will be moving Headquarters early next year to Colombo. With its central location in the Indian Ocean, we believe that the Programme will find a sound centre of gravity in Sri Lanka and we look forward to exploring the opportunities to address maritime crime threats in new and innovative ways. I want to extend my gratitude to the Government of Sri Lanka for offering to host the Programme – we look forward to a continued fruitful partnership.

Thank you for your kind attention.