

**A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO COUNTERING DRUG TRAFFICKING AND
CRIMINAL NETWORKS IN THE MARITIME DOMAIN**

by **Mr. Alan Cole** – UNODC

I am pleased to be back in Sri Lanka within such a short period after a very successful visit in October. The Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP) of UNODC together with the Ministry of Defence in Sri Lanka co-hosted the Meeting of Senior Drug Enforcement Officials of the Indian Ocean Region from 13-15 October in Colombo. We were honoured to have His Excellency Maithripala Sirisena, President of Sri Lanka at the opening ceremony demonstrating the resolute commitment of the Sri Lankan government to counter drug trafficking at sea.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has a mandate to support UN member states counter all forms of transnational organised crime, be it on land, sea or air. In respect of the maritime domain, we do that through the Global Maritime Crime Programme which I have the good fortune to head. The GMCP is based in Nairobi with an excellent team of some 50 professionals in 11 offices across the world. In addition to our main office in Nairobi, we have offices in Vienna, Tanzania, Seychelles, Senegal, Ghana and five offices within Somalia. We hope to open our first South Asian office in Colombo next year.

The Global Maritime Crime Programme grew out of UNODC's response to Somali piracy and now tackles a number of transnational organised crimes in the Indian Ocean region.

The high seas of the Indian Ocean continue to be used for the pursuit of crime including drug trafficking, migrant smuggling, trafficking in persons, trafficking in weapons and illegal fishing.

As many of you are experts on maritime issues, you would be aware that that the two primary constraints facing enforcement of the high seas, is jurisdictional limitations and maritime assets to cover the vast oceans. When we were faced with similar issues on maritime piracy, the GMCP in partnership with international naval operations, such as Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), EU NAVFOR Operation ATALANTA and NATO Operation Ocean Shield, developed a regional response to what was a regional issue off the coast of Somalia. The piracy prosecution model which was an innovative approach to combat maritime piracy provided a deterrent mechanism that resulted in a legal finish for suspected pirates detained on the high seas.

The international naval operations provided the necessary naval presence in the Gulf of Aden and seas off the coast of Somalia.

In tandem, GMCP supported the development of the legislative framework invoking the principle of universal jurisdiction for maritime piracy in four countries namely, Kenya, Seychelles, Mauritius and Tanzania creating the foundation for piracy prosecutions. GMCP developed where necessary the infrastructure of the criminal justice system from building courthouses to prison blocks, and developed local capacity of the Coast Guard, Police, prosecutors, judiciary and prison staff to efficiently administer piracy trials. We are happy to place on record that over the last four years, the piracy prosecution model has tried 318 suspected Somali pirates in three piracy prosecution states.

We are proud to say that in the last 24 months there have not been any successful pirate attacks off the coast of Somalia. However, the ground situation in Somalia that led to piracy remain unchanged and these achievements are reversible we are complacent. We have consistently advocated the need to have the international naval deployment off the Somali coast and the piracy prosecution capacity needs to be maintained and updated.

On the back of a successful piracy prosecution model, we now embark on a new initiative known as the Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime (IOFMC). IOFMC intends to support member states counter six maritime crime typologies namely, drug trafficking, people trafficking, fisheries crime, wildlife trafficking, transporting Somali charcoal and armed robbery at sea. We have made significant progress on four thematic areas of IOFMC.

The high seas of the Indian Ocean continue to be used for the pursuit of criminal enterprise and one crime above others has emerged as a significant threat in the Indian Ocean in the last few years, the trafficking of Afghan heroin to East Africa, South Asian and Australasia.

UNODC terms this route 'Southern Route' and it involves the movement of drugs by sea across the Indian Ocean from the Makran Coast to East Africa (especially Tanzania and Kenya) or South Asia (including Sri Lanka). From there heroin is smuggled by air/sea and land from East Africa to Europe, West Africa, Seychelles and Mauritius, and from South Asia to Australia, China and South East Asia. The increase in the use of the Southern Route is the result of pressure on traditional Northern land routes through Central Asia and the Balkans. The improved law enforcement measures and geo-political differences among transit countries on the land routes have placed pressures on traffickers. The constraints on the land routes are thus having a ballooning effect on the sea route. The key attraction of the southern route for narcotics trafficking is the lack of enforcement capacity on the high seas. The fishing vessels (dhows) depart from the Makran coast with heroin consignments often for drop-offs to smaller vessels near the Swahili coast in East Africa or Sub-Continent.

As mentioned at the commencement of my address, the Meeting of Senior Drug Enforcement Officials of the Indian Ocean Region held in October in Colombo, was the second meeting of the thematic group on drug trafficking under the umbrella of IOFMC. The

first meeting which brought together prosecutors and law enforcement officials was held in Seychelles in March this year. Delegates from 20 countries and 7 organizations attended drug trafficking meetings, which has resulted in the conduct of drug enforcement dialogues (DED) that facilitate the sharing of information relating to multi-state investigations. GMCP in close partnership with the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) have compiled the Compendium of Drug Seizures at Sea, which for the first time recorded all drug seizures on the high seas of the Indian Ocean.

The compendium not only serves as a comprehensive record of drug seizures at sea, but also to develop further analysis based on signature testing that could help law enforcement agencies identify drug networks and manufacturing labs. The attempt is to assess if specific manufacturing labs focus on the maritime domain as a key distribution route. The compendium contains signature test results from several seizures at sea, we are exploring the possibility that signature test results can offer unique chemical compositions or ratio of impurities when compared between different seizures a distinguishing characteristics can identify unique manufacturing processes and in turn the labs that use such processes.

During the meeting in Colombo this October, the Sri Lanka Navy and the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) conducted a practical demonstration of a VBSS exercise. This highlighted to drug enforcement agencies in the region the need for such capabilities to board and search suspected drug vessels at sea. Given the VBSS expertise demonstrated by the Sri Lanka Navy, we plan to develop this capacity within the coastal states of East Africa by bringing them to Trincomalee for training.

We also plan to develop skills and capacity with highly specialized training for drug enforcement agencies such as, training in controlled delivery, integrity management, evidence collection, maritime law enforcement, dynamic security in prisons, UFED Sim data extraction, to list a few. The capacity building will be rolled out over the first half of 2016 before or next regional meeting of senior drug enforcement officials.

We will also be embarking on a very ambitious initiative to facilitate prosecution of drug interdictions on the high seas. We will convene a policy level meeting between six contributing countries to CMF (CTF 150) and three prospective drug prosecuting states in Vienna in February to explore the possibility of developing a drug prosecution model for drug seizures at sea. Unlike maritime piracy drug trafficking is not a crime of universal jurisdiction. Therefore, our work is more complex than with piracy, but we have a good plan as we did with piracy. The analysis of the signature test results will provide us with a repository of data on cultivation regions in Afghanistan. Therefore signature testing of future drug seizures will be linked to cultivation regions in Afghanistan and therefore to terrorism funding.

The other thematic areas of IOFMC have also progressed in their own right to counter specific crime typologies. The group on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants held a planning meeting in Djibouti in March 2015 that developed key recommendations for capacity building of enforcement and prosecution mechanisms in the region.

The thematic group on wildlife and forestry crime held a planning meeting in May 2015 in Kenya, which brought to together prosecutors and law enforcement officials from Indian Ocean and landlocked East African states. The group will closely align its work with existing wildlife enforcement groups such as the Lusaka Agreement Task Force to counter trafficking of wildlife contraband using the maritime domain.

The thematic group on fisheries crime held a planning meeting in October 2015 in Seychelles where significant attention was given to combating the transnational organized crime dimensions of fisheries, which UNODC in partnership with partner agencies will focus.

UNODC through the Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime (IOFMC) is now a major stakeholder in combating criminal activity in the Indian Ocean. As many of the delegates here would agree, enforcement capability of such vast maritime space seems difficult, however tools of modern technology have improved our effectiveness. Today the maritime domain awareness (MDA) capability across the region has greatly expanded the visibility of the surface picture.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The future of maritime law enforcement will be directed by advances in technology. It is therefore, imperative that we look to technology in our fight against maritime crime.

As the Global Maritime Crime Programme of UNODC, we will continue use technology in the fight against crime at sea and expand the level of access to technology to coastal states in the region.

We thank the Sri Lanka Navy for organizing this prestigious forum and the foresight to include elements on maritime crime and law enforcement. GMCP of UNODC is always happy to contribute to such forums and delighted to be back in Sri Lanka.

Thank you.