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Provisional

President: Mr. Agyeman. (Ghana)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Spasse
Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China	Mr. Geng Shuang
France	Mr. Olmedo
Gabon	Mrs. Ngyema Ndong
India	Mr. Raguttahalli
Ireland	Ms. Moran
Kenya	Mr. Kiboino
Mexico	Mr. Cisneros Chávez
Norway	Ms. Juul
Russian Federation	Mr. Kuzmin
United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Ms. Jacobs
United States of America	Mr. Mills

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea and its underlying causes (S/2022/818)

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea and its underlying causes (S/2022/818)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Germany and Nigeria to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Silvio Gonzato, Chargé d'affaires of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, 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: Ms. Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations; Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly, Executive Director, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; Her Excellency Mrs. Florentina Adenike Ukonga, Executive Secretary, Gulf of Guinea Commission; and Commander Nura Abdullahi Yakubu, Maritime Planning Officer, African Union Commission.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/818, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea and its underlying causes.

I now give the floor to Ms. Pobee.

Ms. Pobee (*spoke in French*): I thank the Security Council for giving me this opportunity to present the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea and its underlying causes (S/2022/818). Since the end of the reporting period covered by the report, cases of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea continued to decrease. Nevertheless, it should be

pointed out that it is still too early to draw definitive conclusions as to a long-term decline in this singular threat to stability in the Gulf of Guinea.

(spoke in English)

The steady decline in instances of piracy and armed robbery at sea, which began around April 2021, is the result of concerted efforts by national authorities, who bear the primary responsibility for countering piracy and armed robbery at sea in the region, with the support of regional and international partners. Increased naval patrols by coastal States of the Gulf of Guinea and the regular deployment of naval assets by international partners have together successfully served as a deterrent. Enhanced regional coordination and the convictions for piracy and maritime crimes in Nigeria and Togo in 2021 are important factors in bringing about this positive development.

However, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea morphed over the past decade. Pirate groups are adapting to changing dynamics, both at sea and in coastal areas. In that respect, the recent decrease in instances of piracy may in part be attributable to the shift by criminal networks to other forms of maritime and riverine crime, such as oil bunkering and theft, which they likely view as both less risky and more profitable. It is therefore imperative that States in the Gulf of Guinea and regional structures, such as the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, supported by the international community, enhance and accelerate their efforts to establish a stable and secure maritime environment in the Gulf by fully operationalizing the maritime security architecture set out in the Code of Conduct Concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa. At the same time, the underlying causes, such as youth unemployment and inadequate access to public services, which render coastal communities vulnerable to being drawn into illicit and criminal activities, must also be addressed.

I welcome the recent meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the Gulf of Guinea Commission held on 13 October to review the progress made in addressing regional maritime challenges. In addition, I would like to note the election of Ghana's President, Mr. Nana Akufo-Addo, as the rotating President of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, succeeding his Nigerian counterpart, President Muhammadu Buhari. I would

also like to take note of the ongoing preparations for the first maritime conference of the Economic Community of Central African States on the theme of the governance and security of the ECCAS maritime space and the development of a sustainable blue economy in Central Africa. The conference, which is scheduled to take place in Kinshasa before the end of the year, is intended to develop strategies for maritime governance, security and safety and the development of a sustainable blue economy in the ECCAS space.

As we approach the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct in 2023, the Gulf of Guinea States have continued to demonstrate their commitment to the full operationalization of the Yaoundé Architecture for maritime security. An important milestone was reached on 26 October this year with the signing of a headquarters agreement by the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States and the Government of Cabo Verde for the establishment of the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre (MMCC) for zone G, comprising Cabo Verde, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali and Senegal. Indeed, once the Maritime Coordination Centre becomes functional, it will complete the operationalization of the Yaoundé Architecture in the ECOWAS maritime domain. The MMCC zone E, in Cotonou, and the MMCC zone F, in Accra, are already active.

Another important event in the period since the Secretary-General's report was issued is the multinational maritime exercise Grand African Nemo 2022, which was jointly organized by the Interregional Coordination Centre in Yaoundé and the French navy from 11 to 18 October. The exercise covered a wide area, stretching from Senegal to Angola, and involved 17 of the 19 countries bordering the Gulf of Guinea, as well as eight international partners. Participants were trained to tackle illegal fishing, piracy, marine pollution, illegal trafficking and rescue at sea. The exercise included two real cases relating to the relocation of a boat suspected of drug trafficking and the rendering of assistance to a fishing vessel in distress.

The United Nations system continues to provide the necessary political and technical assistance to the Gulf of Guinea States in their efforts to fully implement the Yaoundé Architecture. On 15 September, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel held a workshop on maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea. An important outcome of the workshop was a call to the

Member States concerned to adopt the required legal frameworks to criminalize piracy. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Maritime Organization continued to provide assistance to the Gulf of Guinea States towards the ratification of the relevant maritime security instruments and their incorporation into national legislation.

At present, there is no firm evidence to suggest any potential or possible linkages between terrorists and pirate groups. However, addressing the underlying social, economic and environmental challenges faced by communities in the region will ultimately serve to contain both threats. In that respect, the United Nations system continues to strengthen its collaboration with international financial institutions towards supporting the region in effectively addressing the underlying causes of fragility and insecurity. In Côte d'Ivoire, for instance, since early 2022, the United Nations and the World Bank have deepened their cooperation through shared analysis, the alignment of strategic priorities and joint advocacy with the Government in an effort to enhance the coherence of efforts and better address key drivers of fragility, such as poverty and unequal access to basic services.

I would like to underscore that, in order to effectively eradicate the menace posed by piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea, national stakeholders, regional structures and the international community must work in close collaboration to address the underlying social, economic and environmental challenges that underpin the recruitment of individuals into maritime crime networks. That requires a holistic and long-term approach, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to address poverty, the lack of alternative livelihoods, youth unemployment and underemployment. Inclusive strategies would need to be underpinned by sex-disaggregated data on the impact of maritime crime on women, girls, men and boys. The development of the Gulf of Guinea's blue economy provides further opportunities for sustainable economic growth for littoral communities. Effective national and regional strategies to tackle governance and security challenges, especially those bordering on illicit financial flows and illegal and unregulated fishing, will be critical.

In conclusion, I want to highlight that, while the Yaoundé Architecture for maritime security has been functioning with increased efficiency, several

significant challenges continue to impede its full operationalization. One key challenge is the lack of predictable and sustainable financing. The forthcoming tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct provides an opportunity to the signatory States, together with ECCAS, ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, to comprehensively assess the status of implementation of the maritime security architecture. That assessment will help to identify priority areas for support and develop a strategic outlook and road map for the next decade to complete the operationalization of the Yaoundé Architecture. While the Gulf of Guinea States bear the primary responsibility for countering piracy and armed robbery at sea in the region, Security Council support for that process and its outcome will be invaluable. The United Nations entities, including through the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the United Nations Regional Office for West Africa and the Sahel, stand ready to provide the necessary political and technical assistance to the Gulf of Guinea States in that endeavour.

The President: I thank Ms. Pobe for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Waly.

Ms. Waly: I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to brief the Security Council today.

I would like to begin by commending the Council for adopting resolution 2634 (2022) in May and for its continued attention to the threat posed by piracy and organized crime at sea, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea. That attention and action have come at the right time. The threat of piracy costs the region lives, stability and more than \$1.9 billion in financial losses every year. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/818) being presented today represents a moment of opportunity in our fight against that threat.

The substantial decrease this year in piracy incidents in the Gulf of Guinea, and in victims of such incidents, particularly of kidnappings for ransom, is a welcome result of many years of work, including in the context of the Yaoundé Architecture for maritime security, as the speaker before me described. At sea, there are more naval patrols and stronger cooperation between regional navies, backed by navies from outside the region that have deployed assets, creating a more secure maritime environment. On land, a greater focus on criminal justice has resulted in stronger measures, including the first-ever piracy convictions in the region, in Togo and Nigeria. However, it is too soon

to declare victory. We need instead to capitalize on the momentum and create a sustainable framework to protect the Gulf of Guinea from pirate groups and any criminal activity they may engage in. As we approach the tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé Architecture next year, there is a real chance to dedicate more attention, resources and action in support of maritime security and the rule of law in the Gulf of Guinea.

First, we need to help Member States in the region to continue developing their capacities and legal frameworks for combating piracy. Domestic laws must criminalize piracy and enable its prosecution in every country in the Gulf of Guinea. We should help them enact such legislation and address the significant legislative gaps that remain in many countries. At the same time, it will be vital to continue building detection and interdiction capacities for law enforcement. That includes training in visit, board, search and seizure procedures, as well as improved maritime domain awareness, and technical and logistical support to facilitate joint maritime patrols. And pirates must be held accountable at the end of that process.

We must improve investigation and prosecution capacities in order to give enforcement efforts teeth and reach a legal completion for every case pursued. The milestone convictions achieved last year in Nigeria and Togo prove that it is possible, and the adoption this year of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Supplementary Act, on the handover of piracy suspects, is an important landmark that will pave the way for more prosecutions. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) was proud to support both of those groundbreaking achievements. We continue to assist countries in the region with legal reforms aimed at enabling them to prosecute piracy, including Gabon, where the adoption of a revised penal code is planned for next month. UNODC is also training naval law enforcement across the region, helping maritime agencies improve cooperation and providing technical assistance to the key institutions of the Yaoundé Architecture.

Secondly, we must be agile and adaptable in responding to shifting trends and emerging threats related to piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. The criminal profits gained from kidnapping-for-ransom piracy remain limited compared to other organized crimes, with about \$4 million paid annually in ransom in order to get abducted seafarers released. New UNODC research suggests that pirate groups in the Gulf of Guinea

may be moving instead into more lucrative maritime crimes, such as oil bunkering, theft and smuggling. Law enforcement in the region needs support against a wide range of illicit maritime activities and related crimes. They include various forms of trafficking and illegal oil refining, as well as illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing. We must prevent the threat from simply taking a different form. In order to close down options for criminals at sea, we suggest considering the possibility of developing a regional framework to expand cooperation against illicit maritime activities. A useful example to consider is the Agreement concerning Cooperation in Suppressing Illicit Maritime and Air Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances in the Caribbean Area, the Treaty of San José, applicable in the Caribbean basin.

There is also a growing spillover of terrorism from the Sahel into the Gulf of Guinea, as evidenced by the rising number of terrorist attacks, particularly in Benin, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire. While there is no concrete evidence to suggest links between terrorists in the Sahel and pirates in the Gulf of Guinea, we must remain vigilant against the possibility of terrorist groups linking up with criminal enterprises at the coast and undermining security gains in the region. UNODC is supporting coastal countries in strengthening criminal justice systems and law-enforcement cooperation and improving prevention measures.

Thirdly, and crucially, we need to address the root causes of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea by working with communities and creating better living conditions. Coastal communities in the region are the most vulnerable to the impact of piracy and maritime crime, and they also face the difficult conditions that drive those illicit activities, such as poverty and youth unemployment. Environmental degradation and biodiversity loss are further affecting lives and livelihoods, fuelled by climate change and made worse by illegal fishing. Criminals at sea must be stopped and held accountable, but in order to ensure a truly sustainable response, due attention must be paid to the people who may become such criminals, along with the factors that drive them to it and the people most affected. We must pursue community-based crime-prevention strategies and engage with at-risk and marginalized young people to help them cultivate personal and social skills, prevent risky behaviours and grant them opportunities. UNODC is supporting the development of community-based crime-prevention strategies in the

Niger delta region of Nigeria, an approach we hope to replicate in other coastal communities.

As we look to capitalize on present successes, we must celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the Yaoundé Architecture next year by pursuing more ambitious, comprehensive and sustainable responses. In order to do that, we need sufficient funding and sustained political attention, and we will count on the help and commitment of the Security Council in that regard. I would also like to join Ms. Pobee in calling for addressing the challenges she mentioned in her briefing. UNODC will continue to work with Member States in the Gulf of Guinea, as well as with the Gulf of Guinea Commission, the Economic Community of Central African States, ECOWAS and our partners across the United Nations, for safer waters and safer shores.

The President: I thank Ms. Waly for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mrs. Ukonga.

Mrs. Ukonga: Let me begin by expressing the Gulf of Guinea Commission's (GGC) appreciation to you, Mr. President, for inviting to me here today. I would also like to commend the current Chair of the GGC, President Akufo-Addo of Ghana, for his commitment and strong determination to working with his colleagues to make the Gulf of Guinea region a zone of peace and security.

My briefing today is totally different from the one I gave in this very Chamber about 10 years ago, in October 2011 (see S/PV.6633), when concerns about the issue of piracy were first relayed not only to the countries of the Gulf of Guinea region but to the Security Council as well. I would like to recall the Council's timely intervention in that regard in adopting resolutions 2018 (2011) of October 2011 and 2039 (2012) of 29 February 2012, urging the States of the region and the subregional organizations of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the GGC to cooperate and collaborate in order to confront this menace.

With the assistance of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, the Summit of Heads of State and Government of ECCAS, ECOWAS and the GGC was held in Yaoundé on 25 June 2013. The Summit led to the signing of a memorandum of understanding between ECOWAS, ECCAS and GGC and the adoption of the Yaoundé Code of

Conduct and Declaration, launching the Yaoundé Architecture for maritime security and safety in the Gulf of Guinea region. That includes the multinational maritime coordination centres (MMCCs) of zones D and A; the Regional Coordination Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa established by ECCAS in 2009; the MMCCs of zones E, F and G established by ECOWAS in 2014; and the Interregional Coordination Centre for the Implementation of the Regional Strategy for Maritime Safety and Security in Central and West Africa, which was established by ECOWAS, ECCAS and GGC in 2014.

That commitment has been amply demonstrated in both actions and words, and the Gulf of Guinea region is gradually losing its unenviable position of replacing the east coast of Africa, off Somalia, in piracy attacks and other maritime crimes.

What is responsible for that decline in maritime piracy? The political will of Governments of the region to take responsibility for securing their maritime domain has increased. There has been better funding of the navies and other security agencies of the region, for the acquisition of assets and other requirements. There has been an increase in and stronger advocacy by regional organizations, such as ECOWAS, ECCAS and GGC, for States to take primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace, security and safety in their maritime domain, and a greater collaboration and mutualization of naval assets by the navies and other maritime security and safety agencies of the States of the region. There has been better training and joint international maritime exercises of the navies as organized by the United States of America, France, the United Kingdom and Brazil, among others. That also leads to confidence-building among the personnel.

There has been a more impactful collaboration between the States of the region and other States outside the region for the sponsorship of programmes, a review of legal texts and prosecution of offenders. In that connection, we wish to acknowledge the great assistance of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in those efforts at the national, multinational and regional levels. Laws have been enacted within the States to prosecute offenders of piracy and other crimes at sea, which has acted as a credible deterrent to would-be offenders, such as the Suppression of Piracy and Other Maritime Offences Act of 2019 promulgated by the Republic of Nigeria. The European Union's Coordinated Maritime Presences concept was

also launched, in January 2021, stationing frigates for patrols on the edges of the exclusive economic zones of the region.

All those measures have led to the considerable decrease in piracy acts in the Gulf of Guinea region.

It is not, however, time to rest on our oars. There are other crimes that are ongoing in the region, and which do not have visible effects on international maritime trade and shipping, but which have a more forceful impact on the well-being of the coastal populations and the economic well-being of the Governments of the region.

We have illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing). Those who spoke before me referred to that. IUU fishing deprives the coastal communities of their means of food and livelihood. It also creates hunger, underemployment and unemployment among the coastal populations and pushes them to join criminal gangs, with promises of quick and fantastic rewards for illegal activities, or to embark on Mediterranean crossings into Europe at the risk of their lives. IUU fishing also deprives the Governments of the region of tremendous revenue.

Oil theft has also increased, especially in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria, with devastating effects on government earnings, as almost 40 to 50 per cent of exploited crude oil is stolen by both local and international collaborators and their accomplices.

The environment is being polluted by unacceptable methods of exploitation of hydrocarbon resources and pipeline vandalism. That leads to damage of the environment: no fishing, no drinkable or usable water and no farming. There is trafficking in arms and persons and illegal immigration.

There are also other factors affecting the coastal populations: erosion of the coastline and flooding of coastal cities due to climate change. Governance challenges are also a factor, as well as a lack of basic amenities and facilities, schools, hospitals, electricity and roads.

What must we continue to do to maintain our level of peace and security? To maintain and increase the level of calm, peace and security that have so far been achieved, the States of the region, regional organizations and international organizations have to intensify their efforts to continue the actions that have produced those heart-warming results. Criminality at

sea begins on land — hence there is a need to maintain actions on land to discourage criminality at sea.

At the national level, the populations' basic needs have to be considered and provided for. Health facilities, potable water, electricity and education facilities have to be provided by the Government at all levels of governance. And other stakeholders who are also doing legitimate business in the region should also supplement government efforts.

The conditions for employment for both youth and adults have to be created and maintained to discourage them from being attracted to criminality for their survival. The provision of assets for the national navies and other maritime security and safety agencies and the coming into operation of the national maritime operational centres have to be continued.

At the regional level, there should be continued advocacy for more sustainable collaboration and cooperation among the navies and other maritime security agencies; the mutualization of assets for effective monitoring, surveillance and deterrent activities in the maritime domain of the region; and the provision of —. Adequate funding should be provided for the Interregional Coordination Centre, the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centres and the regional maritime coordination centres for their functioning and programmes. There are also plans for the establishment of a combined naval task force of the navies of the region for more effective intervention, if necessary.

At the international level, the African Union, United Nations agencies and other international stakeholders should provide assistance for mutually beneficial collaboration between them and the Governments of the region, as well as between them and the coastal populations. Moreover, naval assets should be provided bilaterally, multilaterally or regionally, together with hands-on training on the use of such assets.

In conclusion, if those efforts are continued, increased and sustainable, piracy and other criminal activities will be a thing of the past in the region. The GGC, as an integral part of providing a solution in the process of securing the maritime space of that region, wishes to reiterate its availability, readiness and firm commitment to join all efforts to preserve and consolidate the gains of the past years.

The President: I thank Mrs. Ukonga for her briefing. Her remarks will also be circulated to make up for the breaks in the briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Yakubu.

Mr. Yakubu: As the Security Council is aware, the maritime environment remains a veritable source of economic sustenance to most littoral nations — hence the need for countries to ensure maximum security of the maritime environment for their economic prosperity. However, over the years, the maritime environment around the Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Guinea has become insecure owing to several maritime crimes, particularly sea piracy and sea robbery.

The Gulf of Guinea is endowed with maritime resources and is a strategic hub for global trade, linking Africa and many parts of the world, including Europe and North and South America. It may be considered the linchpin for the success of the African Continental Free Trade Area. However, the region's tremendous resources have been inundated with maritime security challenges, and legal frameworks to prosecute maritime offenders are absent or weak.

As a consequence of those challenges, the Gulf of Guinea was labelled the world's hotspot for maritime crimes, as it became famous for being the world's most dangerous and insecure waters owing to persistent maritime piracy, poaching, sea robbery and other related offences. In 2020 the region recorded the highest number of kidnappings, with approximately 130 crew members kidnapped, representing about 95 per cent of global kidnappings at sea. Those concerns, among others, strengthened the resolve of Ghana and Norway to initiate negotiations to renew and mobilize greater support for regional and national efforts to tackle the highlighted challenges. That led to the adoption of resolution 2634 (2022). I am pleased to be able to say that the number of kidnappings has drastically decreased in the past two years, which can be attributed to the concerted efforts of nations in the Gulf of Guinea and the assistance of the international community.

Furthermore, addressing maritime security in Africa received some attention during the thirteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU), where the Assembly expressed its concern about mounting insecurity in the African maritime domain. The Assembly strongly condemned the illegal activities and undertook to develop a comprehensive and coherent

strategy to address African geostrategic maritime challenges and opportunities. In that regard, the fifteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union formulated an African Integrated Maritime Strategy for the management of the continent's maritime domain. Other documents that assisted include the Yaoundé Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct has continued to be a legal instrument for maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. Since its adoption it has been focused on the repression of piracy, robbery at sea and illicit maritime activities in West and Central Africa. The framework has continued to improve on its key pillars of information-sharing, interdiction, prosecution and support to victims of transnational organized crime in the maritime domain. The prospect of information-sharing among countries in the Gulf of Guinea was brought to bear in the successful interception of two hijacked tankers, *MT Maximus* and, more recently, *Hailufeng II*. That incident highlights the potential of effective maritime information-sharing capacity for maritime operations.

Another important aspect to look at when examining maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea is joint training and exercises. Exercises such as African Partnership Station, Obangame Express and Grand African NEMO have remained instructive in tackling maritime threats, including piracy, in the Gulf of Guinea. In that regard, the AU, as part of its efforts to improve the capacity of African navies, will conduct Amani Africa III as a continental maritime exercise sometime early next year. It will be aimed at enhancing continental and regional maritime cooperation with the objective of creating a stable maritime environment for continued economic prosperity on the continent at large. Additionally, it is also believed that the operationalization of the maritime coordination zone within the context of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct has the potential to continually improve interoperability and communications within the maritime domain.

Let me say a few words about the efforts of the European Union Coordinated Maritime Presences in the Gulf of Guinea. The European Union implemented its pilot Coordinated Maritime Presences concept in 2022. The concept emphasizes the zones already defined by the Yaoundé Architecture. Currently, five members of the European Union are participating in the Coordinated Maritime Presences with naval assets and aiming to maintain at least one asset in the region.

On a final note, I would also like to buttress the efforts of the previous speaker, who spoke about the maritime task force proposed by some States in the Gulf of Guinea. The commitment of some countries in the Gulf of Guinea to establishing a combined maritime task force for the Gulf of Guinea is based on their common desire to address current security fragilities, stabilize the region to facilitate trade and realize their full development potential. It also acknowledges the need for those countries to take responsibility for the current situation with respect to their obligations under regional, continental and international law and conventions. The maritime security task force proposed for the Gulf of Guinea will serve as a regional multilateral mechanism for the deterrence of crimes, rapid intervention and operational responses to maritime security threats and law enforcement, in order to give practical expression to the African Union Peace and Security Council's Communiqué 1012. The Communiqué called on the African Union Commission to address certain issues in collaboration with the existing Yaoundé Architecture for maritime security structures, the regional economic communities and the regional mechanisms for conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict resolution. In a nutshell, what is needed to address these issues is the reinforcement of legal frameworks in the Gulf of Guinea, an increased presence at sea and continued collaboration and coordination in training and operations.

The President: I thank Mr. Yakubu for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Ms. Juul (Norway): We thank the briefers for their important insights, and we also appreciate the recommendations provided by the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), which underline the importance of collaboration between the Council and the PBC.

We thank Ghana and all our colleagues for their close cooperation on this very important issue, and particularly on resolution 2634 (2022), the first in 10 years on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, which was adopted earlier this year. Resolution 2634 (2022) is a strong call to action. The subsequent report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/818) confirmed the devastating effect of maritime insecurity on the stability and economy of Africa and on the safety of seafarers. As a maritime nation, Norway knows the importance of safe waters for trade and socioeconomic development. In addition to stopping pirates and armed robbers,

putting an end to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is also key to a sustainable blue economy. In that regard, let me reiterate how crucial it is to ensure that all activities at sea are carried out in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which sets out the legal framework for all ocean activities globally.

We are encouraged by the recent positive progress on improving maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. Acts of piracy and armed robberies at sea in the Gulf have halved, from 27 cases during the first three quarters of 2021 to 13 this year. We strongly commend the countries of the region for their firm leadership in making that happen. That includes Nigeria's Deep Blue project, as well as the enactment by several countries in the Gulf of Guinea of laws enabling the prosecution of pirates. We commend Council members Gabon and Ghana for leading the way by implementing important new regulations and laws. The Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa have also signalled renewed efforts aimed at maritime security. In addition, we are happy to see that international partners are responding to the Council's call to action. We particularly thank the Group of Seven Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, chaired by Côte d'Ivoire and Germany.

Despite recent progress, both politically and practically, it is time to step up our efforts even further. Now is the time to end the menace of maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea. As the Secretary-General notes in his report, the forthcoming tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé Architecture offers an opportunity to take stock and outline a strategic vision for the next decade. In so doing, we should keep in mind the underlying root causes so that all our progress remains in place. As was also mentioned in the PBC recommendations, a critical factor is not to forget about opportunities for youth, so that they do not get lured or pushed into piracy or other forms of crime.

Together with Ghana and other regional and global leaders, Norway will continue its support for maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, both during and after our term on the Security Council. We pledge to continue support for capacity-building through the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. We are further discussing with ECOWAS how we can support

its efforts. We will also continue to contribute through the Group of Seven++ Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, including at its meeting in Abidjan at the beginning of next month. We stand ready to contribute to making next year's Yaoundé+10 anniversary a meaningful and implementation-focused success.

Mrs. Ngyema Ndong (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Martha Pobeé for her detailed briefing on the United Nations fight against piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. It is always a pleasure for us to hear her speak in French in this forum. I would also like to thank the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Ms. Ghada Fathy Waly, the Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, Ambassador Florentina Adenike Ukonga, and the Maritime Planning Officer of the African Union Commission, Commander Nura Abdullahi Yakubu, for their important briefings.

Since signing the Yaoundé Code of Conduct in 2013 the States of the Gulf of Guinea have been facing major security challenges that have increased with the rise of violent extremism, terrorism and intercommunal clashes. While piracy activities focused in recent years on boarding and attacking oil tankers, we have observed a shift in criminal activities, which are now centred on kidnapping for ransom, which has seen dramatic growth since 2016.

For a long time, my country, Gabon, was relatively spared, but in recent years it has been the victim of acts of piracy characterized by hostage-taking, sometimes with fatal outcomes. This notable increase in piracy activities should draw the attention of the Security Council to the need to strengthen the technical and material capacities of and financial support for State members of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This is the only way that our response to the threat posed by pirates can be effective and coordinated and bring desired results in these two regional economic communities.

Reduced livelihoods in coastal communities in the Gulf of Guinea, owing to the climate crisis as well as pollution from oil and gas extraction by multinational companies, facilitate the recruitment of populations by pirate and terrorist networks. Climate and security have a direct link, which is seen in the increase of insecurity in our populations. This is clearly perceptible in Africa, and in the Gulf of Guinea, in particular. Today the Gulf of Guinea is considered one of the most dangerous

maritime areas in the world, where ship hijackings, crew kidnappings for ransom and cargo thefts thrive.

Aware of these challenges, many measures have been taken by the States of the region to strengthen maritime security. In particular, there has been an increase in the number of convictions for piracy, an expansion in naval patrols, better regional cooperation and the deployment of international navies, and the implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct. These regional efforts have led to a decrease in the number of incidents, from 81 in 2020 to 34 in 2021, according to data provided by the International Maritime Bureau. These significant results are the reflection of strengthened cooperation among all regional stakeholders and international partners. My country welcomes the major role played by regional organizations, including ECCAS, ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, in the resolution and prevention of piracy and other maritime crimes.

Despite these notable advances, maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea, as demonstrated by the attack last April by pirates 260 nautical miles off the coast of Ghana, remains a constant threat that deserves the full vigilance of the Security Council. My country strongly condemns all of these illegal maritime activities and calls on actors at sea to comply with the provisions of international maritime law, resolutions of the Security Council, in particular resolution 2634 (2022), on acts of piracy and armed robbery committed in the Gulf of Guinea, and the domestic maritime law of the States concerned. In this regard, Gabon echoes the call by the African Union Peace and Security Council for countries in the region to implement national, regional and continental maritime-security strategies and frameworks and to develop integrated strategies to address threats in the maritime domain. This insecurity undermines the development of the coastal economies of the region, whose countries face significant direct, indirect and opportunity costs associated with the presence of piracy and armed robbery, while also affecting the shipping industry.

The question of how these criminal groups are financed should also be of concern. Reliable studies show that pirate groups earn approximately \$5 million in direct income per year from theft and hostage-taking. Sharing information and strengthening judicial cooperation between States, particularly in terms of criminal prosecutions, must be a priority in fighting maritime piracy. To this end, a harmonized legal

framework aimed at preventing and repressing acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea is necessary.

In addition, we call for accession to and ratification of the various international and regional mechanisms, in particular the Yaoundé mechanism, for a more effective implementation of the provisions contained therein. Furthermore, we encourage all countries in the region to continue their efforts to address the underlying causes of maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea by taking into consideration the social, economic and environmental challenges. The links between Sahel-based terrorist groups and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea must also be examined, so that rapid, adequate and effective responses commensurate with the organizational and devastating capabilities of these increasingly well-organized entities can be made.

We hope that the celebration in 2023 of the tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships, and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa will be a new opportunity to examine the situation of maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. It is indeed important that the Council continue to address this important challenge to international peace and security.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming our commitment to fighting maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and commend the unflinching efforts of all actors involved in this fight.

Mr. Ragutthalli (India): At the outset, I thank Assistant Secretary-General Martha Pobe, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly, Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, Ambassador Florentina Adenike Ukonga, and African Union Commission Maritime Planning Officer, Commander Nura Abdullahi Yakubu, for their respective briefings.

The problem of maritime piracy is as old as the history of maritime navigation. However, with the rapid growth in international trade through maritime navigation, the growth of piracy over the past two decades has been unprecedented.

Piracy is not only a threat to the freedom of maritime navigation, but also has destabilizing effects on global and regional trade and security. The negative humanitarian impact of that threat on seafarers, who are the lifeline of maritime shipping, can no longer be ignored. The menace of piracy can be defeated only

through effective cooperation and the implementation of legal frameworks on maritime security at both regional and international levels.

Maritime security has been one of the key priorities for India in the Security Council. During India's presidency of the Council last year, our Prime Minister presided over a meeting on maritime security, during which the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2021/15), the first Council document on the issue of maritime security. The salience of that issue was further highlighted through the adoption, in May, of resolution 2634 (2022), on piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea — a crucial initiative by Ghana and Norway.

In that context, we welcome the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/818) on this issue, which contains many useful recommendations. The report notes the decrease in piracy incidents in the Gulf of Guinea, which is underpinned by several factors, including the positive impact of piracy-related convictions in the countries of the region, as well as the deterrent effects of increased naval patrols by the Nigerian navy, aided by better regional cooperation. However, it is important that we not lower our guard against piracy in Gulf of Guinea and continue to take robust anti-piracy measures.

The report notes the growing risk of the terrorist threat spilling over from the central Sahel towards the Gulf of Guinea, as demonstrated by the terrorist attacks against Government forces in Benin and Togo since 2021. We need to continue to look out for links among extremist, terrorist and pirate groups in the Gulf of Guinea, as those links form a lethal nexus with the potential to reverse the recent anti-piracy gains in Gulf of Guinea.

The low conviction rates in piracy cases remain a cause of concern, despite the two recent convictions in Togo and Nigeria. We welcome those convictions, but much more needs to be done to check the impunity of pirates.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) remains the main legal framework for addressing piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. We encourage the countries of the region to take steps to enact legislation for criminalizing piracy to the full extent, as indicated in the report and as set out in UNCLOS, in order to achieve the effective suppression of piracy in the region.

The Yaoundé Architecture has played a significant role in enhancing regional cooperation. However, the zonal, subregional and interregional coordination arrangements face several challenges, such as a lack of predictable and sustainable financing, adequate expertise, equipment and logistical support and timely information-sharing. The international community needs to enhance its support to the countries of the region and regional architectures in order to overcome those bottlenecks.

We commend the efforts of Ghana in prioritizing the issue during its chairmanship of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). We welcome the recent adoption of the ECOWAS Supplementary Act on the Conditions of Transfer of Persons Suspected of Having Committed Acts of Piracy and their Associated Property and/or Evidence.

India has been engaged with the countries of the region, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea, on maritime matters, including through the deployment of navy patrols, as well as on developing the anti-piracy capacities of the countries in the region. As mentioned in the present report, the Indian navy was deployed in the Gulf of Guinea for a month, starting on 4 September, thereby contributing to efforts to counter piracy and armed robbery, as well as to training and awareness workshops in the region. The Information Fusion Centre — Indian Ocean Region, located near Delhi, India, is integrated with the Yaoundé Architecture through a third-country liaison officer stationed there, and it continues to effectively contribute to maritime domain awareness in the area.

In conclusion, India will continue to support all national, regional and international efforts to strengthen maritime security, including in the Gulf of Guinea, in consultation with the countries of the region.

Ms. Jacobs (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom welcomes this briefing on the findings of the Secretary-General's report on piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea (S/2022/818), and thanks all our briefers today. We also welcome the advisory note of the Peacebuilding Commission.

I would like to make three brief points today.

First, the United Kingdom is pleased to note the decline in incidents and the strength of regional cooperation in tackling the issue. We are proud of our own collaboration with partners in order to promote security and stability — from putting the issue at the

heart of our Group of Seven presidency to the naval visit by *HMS Trent* to defer attacks on maritime trade.

Secondly, as the Secretary-General's report notes, the drivers of piracy are complex and multifaceted. We encourage a continued focus on the impact of poverty, youth unemployment and environmental degradation on criminal activity. Engagement is needed at all levels, including community-based responses, and the United Kingdom will continue to work closely with partners in support of a holistic approach in the Gulf of Guinea.

Finally, we reiterate the importance of all efforts to tackle piracy and armed robbery, complying with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which is the legal framework within which all activities in the ocean and seas are carried out, and aligning closely with the provisions of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): I thank our briefers for their insightful and informative presentations to the Security Council.

The United States is committed to the international navigation, security and sustainable development of the Gulf of Guinea and countries of the region, and indeed, the entire Atlantic Ocean basin. Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea is essential to maintaining an Atlantic Ocean that provides for the safety and prosperity of Atlantic nations and those that depend on its waters for their livelihoods. The United States reaffirms its commitment to assisting States of the region to counter piracy and armed robbery at sea and to hold perpetrators, facilitators and key figures of criminal networks accountable, as well as to address other related destabilizing and illicit activities in the Gulf of Guinea.

We concur with our briefers that, through the collaborative efforts of many nations, including through piracy convictions in Nigeria and Togo and the leadership of the Nigerian navy, the frequency of such incidents has dramatically decreased. However, we note that less than one third of the Gulf of Guinea countries have enacted legislation to criminalize piracy, as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

We cannot let down our guard against all threats to maritime security. Challenges such as piracy, the illegal, unreported and unregulated engagement in fishing, transnational organized crime, climate change and environmental degradation all pose a threat to livelihoods, as we have heard. Maritime

drug trafficking, for example, has far-reaching and devastating consequences for the citizens of Atlantic Ocean and beyond.

We take note, from the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/818), that pirate groups have also shifted activity and are now operating in West and Central Africa. The United States has pledged to increase our collaboration and coordination with nations across the Atlantic, as we all share similar concerns about our shared resource. Our naval forces in Africa conduct training and exercises throughout the Gulf of Guinea with our African partners, but also with counterparts from Brazil, Portugal and other allies. Increasingly, we see climate resilience and sustainable economies as important elements of maritime security, and we therefore remain committed to working with our African partners to address climate change, food insecurity and other factors that are further fuelling recruitment by criminal piracy and terrorist groups alike. To that end, we commend the actions of Benin, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo, with the assistance of UNODC, to develop harmonized standard operating procedures on matters such as evidence collection at sea and chain of custody.

The United States also commends the efforts of regional and subregional organizations, namely the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Economic Community of West African States, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, and their partners in their coordination to enhance cooperation on maritime security and to further operationalize the Yaoundé Architecture. The United States welcomes the progress made by States bordering the Gulf of Guinea in their implementation of the Yaoundé Architecture on maritime security and welcomes further efforts to support the Architecture as it nears its tenth anniversary.

Finally, we are active members of the Group of Seven (G-7) Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, serving as co-Chair in 2020. We commend the work of the current co-Chairs, Côte d'Ivoire and Germany, and we look forward to the G-7 Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea plenary meeting to be held on 1 and 2 December in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Olmedo (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank all the briefers for their presentations.

France commends Ghana and Norway for their efforts to mobilize the international community on the issue of maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, which

is a strategic area not only for the coastal countries, but also for their landlocked neighbours, which are equally dependent on access to the sea. We also welcome the adoption of resolution 2634 (2022), negotiated by Ghana and Norway. We call on all Member States and the regional and international organizations to implement all the recommendations contained in that text.

I would like to make two points.

First, we welcome the significant decline in acts of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, as attested to in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/818). France calls for all efforts contributing to that result to be pursued and strengthened. Here I wish to refer, first and foremost, to the actions of the countries in the region, on both the security and the legal and judicial fronts, to criminalize acts of piracy and conduct investigations and prosecutions. I also refer to the cooperation frameworks that have been put in place, starting with the Yaoundé Architecture, which we must continue to operationalize and support. Finally, I wish to highlight the support provided by the international community, the United Nations and its agencies, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

As the Secretary-General's report reminds us, the European Union is the only partner to deploy a sustained and coordinated maritime presence in support of the States of the Gulf of Guinea, and we are proud of that. France is proud to participate in that effort. Moreover, we are taking action on a bilateral basis, in particular in Côte d'Ivoire and Gabon. In Gabon, for example, French personnel and French ships regularly conduct trainings and exercises with their Gabonese partners.

Secondly, the Security Council must remain mobilized and continue to closely follow maritime security issues in the Gulf of Guinea. The issue is, in fact, far from being limited to piracy. The report of the Secretary-General underlines the links between piracy, climate change and illegal fishing, which call for a broad approach, including by addressing issues related to development, support for local communities and the preservation of ecosystems. We must also remain attentive to the links between organized crime and terrorism.

France calls for the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, the Group of Five for the Sahel and the Accra Initiative to continue in their efforts to

implement regional security initiatives. France will remain committed to supporting those efforts and continuing its coordination work with all partners in the region. We will advocate for regional efforts to benefit from sustainable funding, including from United Nations assessed contributions.

We will also continue to provide operational support at the request of the countries concerned. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, our initiatives include the Franco-Ivorian International Academy for the Fight Against Terrorism and the Interregional Maritime Security Institute in Abidjan.

Mr. Spasse (Albania): I extend my thanks to Assistant Secretary-General Pobee, Executive Director Waly, Executive Secretary Ukonga and Commander Yakubu for their briefings.

As the tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct approaches, Albania attaches great importance to this discussion, which can provide us with an opportunity to reaffirm our commitments, recognize the progress achieved and think about the future. Resolution 2634 (2022), adopted in March, marked an important step in drawing the Council's attention to maritime security. We must sustain that momentum.

We strongly commend the recent decrease in piracy and armed robbery incidents at sea in the Gulf of Guinea, which can be attributed to national, regional and international initiatives. However, despite that progress, criminality continues to be of concern, with ongoing activity, not only of piracy and armed robbery, but also the kidnapping of seafarers, illegal fishing, trafficking and transnational organized crime. Those illicit activities thrive on a lack of governance and State presence and weak institutions, subsequently undermining the economic development of the entire region.

Albania fully supports the Yaoundé Architecture, through which important gains have been achieved in the Gulf of Guinea. Nevertheless, we are concerned that the framework lacks the necessary resources and ownership to maximize its potential. Further work is required to ensure appropriate political direction, as well as adequate legal and operational support. We encourage the intraregional cooperation between the Economic Community of Central African States, the Economic Community of West African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission to strengthen

maritime security and to fully operationalize the Yaoundé Architecture.

It is concerning that many States in the region have yet to adopt the necessary legislation to criminalize piracy and armed robbery under their domestic laws. In that regard, we call on the countries in the Gulf of Guinea to take the necessary measures and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable. Strengthening the rule of law must be a priority.

As the Secretary-General has highlighted, it is only through a multifaceted approach that we can tackle the root causes of piracy and maritime crime in the Gulf of Guinea, which are depriving local communities of their livelihoods. We stress the need for national, regional and international efforts to focus on addressing the underlying social, economic and environmental challenges while creating opportunities for women and young people. Furthermore, we must curb the growing insecurity in the region, counter illicit activities and dismantle criminal networks, which use existing vulnerabilities to expand their scope. Regional and international collaboration is essential to prevent the flow of revenues generated by piracy and armed robbery at sea from contributing to the financing of terrorism in the wider region.

Finally, the success of the Yaoundé Architecture is dependent on stakeholders' action and engagement. It is only through greater cooperation between the countries of the region, the relevant organizations, the international community and the private sector that we can effectively reduce and prevent the threat at sea and on shore.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): I would like to start by thanking Assistant Secretary-General Pobebe, Ms. Waly, Ambassador Ukonga and Commander Yakubu for their important and informative briefings. I also welcome the participation in the meeting of the delegations of Germany, Nigeria and the European Union.

Brazil has been paying attention to the international security implications of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea. As a member of the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone, it is our priority to strengthen the ongoing counter-piracy efforts in the region and to prevent the spread of piracy. We are working towards the goal of making the South Atlantic a zone of peace. We are pleased to see that the report (S/2022/818) outlines a decrease, since April 2021, in

instances of piracy and armed robbery in the region. That trend results from a series of factors, including the deterrent effects of increased naval patrols.

It is our understanding that the States of the Gulf of Guinea are taking the lead and bearing the primary responsibility for countering piracy and armed robbery in the region. We commend them for their ongoing efforts, particularly their concerted action in operationalizing the Yaoundé Architecture, which is central to countering piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, as it brings together key regional actors such as the Economic Community of Central African States, the Economic Community of West African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission. We also note that the tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé Architecture next year will provide an opportunity for assessing the progress made and challenges ahead when it comes to enhancing counter-piracy activity in the region.

Enhancing the modalities for cooperation and naval capacity-building will be key to supporting the efforts of the region to address that complex challenge. As a member of the Group of Seven Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, Brazil stands ready to continue supporting the countries in the region through a wide range of cooperation initiatives and joint naval operations. We would like to highlight the approach taken by Operation Guinex, led by the Brazilian navy, which goes beyond the scope of a patrolling mission and includes joint exercises and training activities together with our partners in the Gulf of Guinea. During this year's exercises, Brazil sent its *União* frigate in June, at the request of its local partners, in order to make up for the fact that no other foreign ship would be patrolling the region. In addition to Operation Guinex and bilateral training programmes, Brazil is also a participant in the Obangame Express and Grand African NEMO joint maritime exercises.

Brazil appreciates that the report thoroughly addresses the underlying causes of piracy and armed robbery in the region, as well as any possible or potential linkages with terrorism in West and Central Africa and the Sahel. We note the fact that to date there is no evidence of any operational, organizational or ideological links between terrorism and pirate groups in the Gulf of Guinea. We concur with the report's findings that there are multidimensional factors that contribute to piracy and armed robbery, such as widespread poverty and high underemployment and unemployment rates. We also acknowledge that those

underlying causes may become part of a vicious cycle, as the effects of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea have caused significant financial hardship to the whole region, mainly due to disruptions to shipping, trade, transportation and Government revenues. The costs of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea steal resources that could otherwise be used for the development of the region.

With regard to references to climate change, Brazil would like to stress that increasing the means of implementation are of the utmost importance, including in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

To conclude, as this year has marked the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Brazil would like to reaffirm its full commitment to the objectives, purposes and principles enshrined in the Convention. It is clear to us that UNCLOS sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out, including countering piracy and armed robbery at sea. It is therefore important that the Gulf of Guinea States continue their efforts to ensure that their domestic and regional legal frameworks are in line with UNCLOS.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, my thanks go to all of our briefers today for their very valuable information and useful contributions.

During the reporting period, the number of pirate attacks and robberies on ships in the Gulf of Guinea has slightly decreased. At the same time, however, the root causes of those issues have not yet been eliminated, and therefore the risks associated with the security of international shipping, including of kidnappings for ransom, unfortunately remain.

We appreciate the efforts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to provide technical assistance to the States of the Gulf of Guinea, including through the Global Maritime Crime Programme Fund. We believe that building the capacities of coastal States and their ability to suppress and counter acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea is the key to success, and we are actively participating in that important work. During the reporting period, Russia's contributions to the Fund were used to provide targeted technical assistance to Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana and

Nigeria. The focus of our efforts has been to improve the combat capabilities of the maritime security forces of those States to ensure the sustainable stabilization of the situation in the waters of the Gulf of Guinea.

In the light of the regional specificities of piracy and robbery at sea, we continue to advocate the establishment of a specialized entity under the auspices of the United Nations that would be responsible for addressing the entire spectrum of issues related to combating maritime crime. With that I would like to end my brief statement.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): I would like to thank Ghana for convening today's meeting on this important topic, as well as all the briefers for their invaluable insights.

The United Arab Emirates welcomes the ongoing international cooperation countering piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea. We are encouraged by the progress achieved in stabilizing one of the most important maritime zones in Africa. Over the past year, particularly since April 2021, there has been a substantial decline in the number of piracy incidents and crew kidnappings at sea in the Gulf of Guinea — from 123 cases of piracy and armed robbery at sea in 2020, the number dropped to 45 in 2021.

The downward trend has continued in 2022, with the International Maritime Organization reporting just 13 incidents of piracy and armed robbery in the first six months of the year. That is a significant decline, showing that international, regional and national efforts can improve the maritime security landscape in the Gulf of Guinea. But we must also recognize that the drop in the piracy threat may also be due to a shift in the focus of the criminal groups active in the region, as Ms. Pobe mentioned in her briefing.

Piracy remains a serious problem, however, and should therefore concern us all. The combined financial loss caused by instances of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is estimated to be almost \$2 billion a year, in addition to the indirect financial damage to coastal communities. As we approach the tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct next year, we commend the signatories to the Code of Conduct for advancing the framework in order to curb threats to freedom of navigation, protect the safety of the people in the region and promote trade exports and the economic growth of the coastal States. To protect the gains made so far and remain united on this issue, the Security Council should continue

to support the implementation of resolution 2634 (2022), which was spearheaded by Ghana and Norway, including by coordinating with other stakeholders, such as the Peacebuilding Commission and all the relevant United Nations agencies.

Combating piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea is undoubtedly a long-term endeavour that requires joint action among affected coastal States, regional organizations and international partners. The United Arab Emirates would like to stress three points with regard to the impacts of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and its root causes so that we can better inform our policy response.

First, as has been repeated here today, we know that behind the threats to maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea lurks a wide range of criminal activities. Such activities include the smuggling of weapons and trafficking in natural resources, both of which are increasingly being used to the benefit of cross-border terrorist groups. The United Arab Emirates is alarmed by reports that terrorist groups in the Sahel are increasingly threatening the countries along the Gulf of Guinea. We are also deeply concerned about the risk of the spread of extremism throughout the region and its short- and long-term destabilizing effects on communities. The United Arab Emirates believes that the burden of confronting terrorism cannot, and should not, be borne by any single country or region alone. We therefore support, and will continue to support, coastal West African countries in their efforts to counter terrorism. We particularly thank Ghana for its strong and forward-looking leadership in that regard.

Secondly, I would like to further emphasize the importance of regional anti-piracy efforts. Regional leaders are best placed not only to understand the threats posed by piracy, but also to alert neighbouring States to piracy activity, so that early prevention initiatives can be put in place. They are also best placed to provide important contexts for community-based prevention efforts, which are critical to combating criminal and terrorist activities and recruitment. I would add that those community-based efforts must take into account the unique challenges that women and girls face in such environments.

Thirdly, to find a sustainable solution to the problem of piracy and armed robbery at sea, we must address its root causes. We believe that one of the critical challenges that contributes to such problems is climate change. The coastal belt off the Gulf of Guinea

is low-lying and vulnerable to sea-level rise, which, coupled with the continued environmental degradation in the Niger delta and other climate-related disruptions, exacerbates fragilities in the region and causes coastal communities to face the loss of fishing stocks and agricultural opportunities. That, in turn, leads to the loss of livelihoods, increasing poverty and instability. Such an environment is highly vulnerable to exploitation by pirate groups, which draw desperate communities into criminal activities as a means of survival. Anti-piracy solutions in the Gulf of Guinea must therefore include measures that help to improve regional collaboration on climate change and the climate resilience of the most exposed communities.

We again thank Ghana for spotlighting this matter on the Council's agenda, and we reiterate the support of the United Arab Emirates for all efforts towards peace, stability and prosperity in that region.

Ms. Moran (Ireland): Let me extend our thanks to our briefers for their very insightful inputs this morning. I also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2022/818). It is rare that, as the Security Council, we meet to welcome positive developments. We very much welcome that, as well as the decrease in instances of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea.

Ireland commends the ongoing work of the coastal States of the Gulf of Guinea, the co-penholders on resolution 2634 (2022) — Ghana and Norway — the African Union and key partners, including the European Union (EU), which took effective steps to address the issue of piracy and maritime security. The success of the ongoing regional and multinational efforts towards suppressing maritime crime is underpinned by a series of factors, including the positive impact of piracy convictions and the deterrent effects of increased naval patrols. That is coupled with improved cooperation through the Yaoundé Architecture, which has optimized maritime cooperation across the Gulf of Guinea.

In addition, the EU continues to support regional efforts to address the many challenges of maritime security, including by ensuring the implementation of an EU strategy and action plan, which contribute to the strengthening of the capacity of coastal States in the region.

A common response to the threat of piracy and armed robbery at sea is the hiring of private military and security companies to provide maritime security.

That elevates the risk of human rights violations. Ireland stresses that, while suppressing the menace of piracy is an important priority, it must be done in accordance with international law, including international human rights law.

Now is the time to maintain the momentum and build on the gains made. Ireland encourages increased cooperation and coordination among initiatives at the national, regional, and international levels to continue to address maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea.

However, the long-term success of the various initiatives in turning the tide is not guaranteed, neither are the gains of last year sustainable, without addressing the underlying causes of piracy and armed robbery. The Secretary-General's report notes that the drivers of piracy activity are complex, often impacted by the evolving dynamics on land. They include multidimensional factors, such as widespread poverty, high unemployment, inadequate access to public services, security threats, legal and jurisdictional deficiencies and corruption. Climate change and other environmental threats are also significant factors. Indeed, their links with security, including maritime security, are increasingly evident. In that context, criminal activities, including maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea, are all too often perceived as a means of survival.

Our response to those drivers must be multidimensional. It is only by adopting a comprehensive, holistic and inclusive solution to the underlying causes that we can sustainably address the problem. Ireland stresses that those solutions must address the socioeconomic challenges of the region and create economic opportunities, including for women and the young people of coastal communities. That should include the full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ireland wishes to reaffirm that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. That includes countering piracy and armed robbery at sea. UNCLOS requires all States to cooperate to the fullest extent possible in the repression of piracy. It is clear that some States are falling short in that regard, thereby hindering the effective suppression of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. In particular, it is regrettable that less than a third of the Gulf of Guinea countries have enacted legislation that criminalizes piracy to the full extent set

out in UNCLOS. Ensuring full respect for UNCLOS is critical, as it lays down rules for the mutual benefit of all States. The free and peaceful use of the seas and oceans is vital to us all.

Mr. Kiboino (Kenya): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. I also thank all our briefers for their insights and perspectives. We take note of the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/818), as presented by Assistant Secretary-General Martha Pobee.

Piracy, armed robbery and transnational organized crime at sea pose a grave threat to international navigation and the security and sustainable development of both coastal and hinterland areas, including landlocked countries. Kenya strongly condemns such acts wherever they are perpetrated. Those threats are acute in the Gulf of Guinea, which has been labelled the world's hotspot for piracy. Despite the reported decline in piracy incidents in the Gulf of Guinea, the region accounted for all the kidnappings at sea worldwide in 2021.

Besides, the threat of piracy, especially in the Gulf of Guinea, is made existential by its links, or potential links, to terrorist groups, armed groups and criminal networks. Kenya therefore welcomed the adoption of resolution 2634 (2022), the negotiations of which were led by Ghana and Norway. The resolution reaffirms that addressing piracy and armed robbery at sea is important to both the regional economy and stability and the safety of seafarers. As we reflect on the utility of that and other instruments in combating piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, I wish to underscore five pertinent points.

First, Kenya believes that the solution to the menace of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea lies in undertaking a comprehensive approach to addressing the root causes. Such an approach dovetails with the African Union's integrated maritime strategy, the aim of which is to foster increased wealth creation from Africa's oceans and seas by developing a sustainable, thriving blue economy in a secure and environmentally sustainable manner.

Support for coastal countries to patrol their sea waters is good, but it is not enough. Those countries need to be supported to invest in safe and sustainable blue economies in order to tackle poverty and underdevelopment. In that vein, it is important that coastal States have the ability to manage the sustainable exploitation of their natural resources, both at sea and on land, for the benefit of their own economies. That

requires resilient institutions, effective regulatory frameworks and strong political will.

Secondly, training and capacity-building are crucial. Kenya commends initiatives such as the Global Maritime Crime Programme of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which promotes capacity-building to address and eradicate crimes committed at sea, including acts of piracy. We advocate for increased technical and capacity-building support for the countries of the region through both multilateral and bilateral arrangements.

Thirdly, commitment to an integrated strategy for maritime security based on existing regional mechanisms for combating piracy and armed robbery at sea is critical. We commend the countries in the region for their cooperation, particularly through the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, under which regional centres have been established for information-sharing and pooling resources. We call for international support to fill funding gaps and ensure the full operationalization of that regional framework.

Fourthly, as we have learned from our experience in dealing with piracy off the coast of Somalia and elsewhere, it is vital for the necessary national and legal frameworks to be in place in order to ensure the effective prosecution of those directly and indirectly involved in piracy. We encourage countries in the region that have not yet done so to institute and enforce laws that criminalize piracy and armed robbery at sea in their domestic laws, in line with resolution 2634 (2022). The assistance of UNODC to countries in the region is appreciated and further encouraged.

Fifthly, we commend the countries of the region for their leadership in contributing to reducing the number of reported cases of piracy and armed robberies at sea in the Gulf of Guinea. Notable examples of that include Nigeria's Integrated National Security and Waterways Protection Infrastructure, also known as the Deep Blue Project, as well as the implementation of new regulations and laws by Ghana and Gabon. We advocate for closer cooperation among the countries of the region through the sharing of best practices and expertise, coordination and synergy of action.

In conclusion, Kenya reiterates that a comprehensive plan that gives full consideration to the root causes of the issue, including the need for social reintegration and job creation, will be the most effective way to tackle this threat. In that regard, Kenya welcomes and fully

supports the advisory note issued by the Peacebuilding Commission on this subject.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the briefers for their briefings.

The Gulf of Guinea is an important international waterway and energy resource base. The maintenance of security and stability in the Gulf of Guinea is of great significance for regional and global peace and development. Since last year, thanks to the joint efforts of the countries of the region and the international community, the maritime security environment in the Gulf of Guinea has improved, and incidents of piracy have been in visible decline. At the same time, piracy continues to frequent the region and still seriously affects the peace and development of coastal countries and their landlocked neighbours. The international community should continue to strengthen coordination and cooperation and take timely and effective measures in order to jointly safeguard the security and stability in the Gulf of Guinea and the region as a whole. I would like to make the following three points.

First, we should further strengthen regional cooperation and international coordination and build synergies to safeguard maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. Piracy is cross-sea and cross-border organized crime. It moves about and is hard to locate. Only by strengthening coordination and cooperation can we effectively combat piracy. We are pleased to see that the navies of various countries of the region have increased their input and made positive efforts to prevent and combat piracy.

Some progress has also been made in regional maritime law enforcement cooperation. Anti-piracy operations involve a country's internal affairs, such as national sovereignty, domestic legislation and law enforcement for security. On the premise of respecting the sovereignty and leadership of coastal States, the international community should support all the parties concerned in fully implementing the Yaoundé Code of Conduct and support regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission in playing a leading role in enhancing the capacity and efficiency of the fight against piracy. At the same time, it is also necessary to guard against and curb the spread of terrorist forces from the Sahel to the Gulf of Guinea.

Secondly, we should further leverage the advantages and the role of United Nations agencies in providing guidance and support in the fight against piracy. In May, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2634 (2022), on combating piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, setting out provisions and making arrangements for combating piracy, strengthening anti-piracy legislation, formulating a sound maritime security strategy and deepening international and regional cooperation. The international community should jointly implement that resolution and provide assistance to coastal countries and regional organizations in information-sharing, exchanges of experience, technical assistance and capacity-building. Agencies such as the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Maritime Organization and INTERPOL should fully leverage their professional advantages, help coastal countries strengthen the building of regional anti-piracy mechanisms, carry out training for maritime security forces and improve joint law enforcement, maritime monitoring and other operational capabilities.

Thirdly, we should further clarify the “development first” concept and gradually tackle the root causes of piracy. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/818) shows that 242 million people in the Gulf of Guinea live below the poverty line. Those grave socioeconomic development and livelihood issues in some coastal countries are a significant underlying cause of the problem of piracy. Regarding the rich and concentrated energy resources and the great potential for development in the Gulf of Guinea, the key lies in translating the advantages of natural endowments into a driving force for development, job opportunities and well-being in coastal countries.

The marine economy in the Gulf of Guinea has great prospects, but development and investment are clearly inadequate. The international community should adapt measures to local conditions, increase assistance to coastal countries in port construction, aquaculture and fishing, support the development of the marine economy in the Gulf of Guinea, engage in international cooperation, rationally develop and utilize marine resources, help regional countries achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as soon as possible and completely eliminate the underlying causes that are the breeding ground for piracy.

China has always actively participated in international cooperation in combating piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. In recent years, Chinese naval convoys have been invited to conduct joint anti-piracy drills with the navies of Nigeria, Cameroon and other countries and have provided anti-piracy material and equipment assistance to coastal countries. In May, the Chinese military held its first symposium on the security situation in the Gulf of Guinea, in which China, the coastal countries and the Interregional Coordination Centre for the Implementation of the Regional Strategy for Maritime Safety and Security in Central and West Africa held in-depth discussions on the theme of maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea and reached many important consensuses.

Going forward, China will continue to carry out counterpart exchanges with coastal countries in the fields of maritime security, policing, military affairs and other fields and promote practical cooperation in detection, early warning, joint cruising, drill and training exercises and equipment assistance in order to play an active role in and make greater contributions to the maintenance of maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.

Mr. Cisneros Chávez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank all the participants for their interesting briefings. I take note of the advisory note transmitted by the Peacebuilding Commission with regard to the matter we are addressing today.

As we have seen, almost 10 years since the adoption of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, the fight against piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has yielded very positive results. Mexico welcomes the national efforts and regional strategies that have allowed us to significantly decrease the piracy incidents in the area. It is now essential to maintain and expand the commitment and coordination deployed so far to entrench the progress achieved and respond to the new security challenges faced by the coastal States of the Gulf of Guinea. I will focus on three issues.

First, Mexico has noted that the prosecution and punishment of those involved in acts of piracy has played a key role in decreasing the number of piracy incidents. Therefore, it is important that States, in particular those in the region, continue to work on adapting their national legal frameworks. Among other issues, that means codifying the crime of piracy, which is subject to the regime of universal jurisdiction, as established by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the

Sea (UNCLOS). We reiterate that UNCLOS is the legal framework within which all activities conducted on the seas and oceans should be regulated.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/818) shows that the rule of law and accountability — essential elements of good governance — are effective tools for combating piracy and should be used to respond to other forms of violence that threaten regional stability.

Secondly, with regard to security trends, we are also concerned about the spread of terrorism from the central Sahel to the Gulf of Guinea. The recent attacks in Togo and Benin are a warning sign that requires our attention. The international community should support the efforts of the countries of the region to counter the spread of terrorism and other criminal activities. We hope that the Accra Initiative will receive political support and sufficient material means to translate it into measures that can curb the tide of violence.

Another trend that demands a timely response is the shift of piracy cases from the Gulf of Guinea States that are members of the Economic Community of West African States to those that are members of the Economic Community of Central African States. We should intensify the exchange of best practices and cooperation between those two subregional organizations to extend the results to all coastal States of the Gulf of Guinea. The Interregional Coordination Centre is an example of what can be done in that area.

Member countries should also continue to strengthen the architecture based on the Yaoundé Code of Conduct. We urge the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to support that work.

Thirdly, a comprehensive response to security challenges requires public policies aimed at reducing poverty and inequality in the region. The population living in the Gulf of Guinea area needs development strategies that allow them to prosper through legal activities. That will make them less vulnerable to recruitment by criminal groups and to radicalization.

As we have seen, the consequences of climate change have a direct impact on the livelihoods of coastal communities. International cooperation is key to mitigating those effects and strengthening the resilience of those communities.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Ghana.

At the outset, I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee and Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Ghada Fathi Waly for their briefings, which complement the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/818) on the situation of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. I also thank Ambassador Florentina Adenike Ukonga, Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, and Commander Nura Abdullahi Yakubu, Maritime Planning Officer of the African Union Commission, for their additional perspectives. We furthermore thank the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) for its advisory note issued for today's meeting.

Since 2012, the Security Council has been an important enabler of global solidarity for combating piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea region. The adoption of resolution 2039 (2012) in February 2012 ignited the actions that today reflect the maritime security architecture of the Gulf of Guinea. We therefore believe that the adoption of resolution 2634 (2022) last May was an important reaffirmation of the Council's commitment to strengthening maritime security in the region as the member States of the Gulf of Guinea prepare for the tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct.

The indications from the International Maritime Bureau continue to show the Gulf of Guinea as the region with the worst record for piracy, despite the recorded decline in piracy incidents from 123 in 2020 to 45 in 2021 and a further drop to 13 between January and June this year.

We also recognize the persisting challenges relating to inadequate staffing of the maritime coordination centres under the Yaoundé Architecture, the lack of appropriate equipment and logistical support by national navies, as well as the sometimes ineffective exchange of information among participating countries. It is in that context that we consider it important to sustain an international policy focus on the security of the Gulf of Guinea through support for national and regional actions. The progress achieved and the momentum gained in the fight against piracy since April of last year should be built upon, not decreased.

In this statement, we intend to highlight three main points: first, the need to strengthen the institutional framework; secondly, the need to address the underlying

drivers of piracy and armed robbery at sea; and thirdly, the need to enhance partnerships.

On the question of institutional frameworks, regional and continental blueprints such as the Yaoundé Architecture and the 2050 Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy, as well as the 2016 Charter on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa, otherwise known as the Lomé Charter, have proven critical in mobilizing national actions to combat piracy and armed robbery at sea in the region. Their further implementation, however, is hampered by operational, logistical, funding, technical and capacity-building gaps. For example, the lack of adequate material and logistical resources has delayed the establishment of the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centres (MMCCs) in both zones E and F, as well as the operationalization of the MMCCs in zones A and G, under the Economic Community of Central African States and the Economic Community of West African States, respectively. In addition, fewer than one third of Member States have enacted legislation that criminalizes piracy to the full extent set out in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It is therefore important that those gaps be addressed to ensure effective institutions that can respond to the piracy menace.

With regard to the underlying drivers of piracy in the region, we note the increasing levels of poverty, high underemployment and unemployment, especially among the region's youth, inadequate access to public services and other aggravating factors, such as climate change and the disproportionate impact of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the region. We advocate a multidimensional and whole-of-society approach in resolving such drivers, while involving the private sector, civil society and donor partners. We encourage the integration of gender and youth perspectives into maritime security strategies and welcome interventions aimed at strengthening national efforts in building climate resilience and the protection of fishing areas of affected communities. We acknowledge the PBC's intervening role in that regard and welcome its call on the private sector, including oil and mining companies, to enhance their corporate social responsibility, as well as technical assistance and community-based support to vulnerable communities.

On the matter of enhanced partnerships, it is important that Member States in the region be supported in, among others, formulating their respective national maritime strategies and implementation plans and

strengthening the investigative capacities of their maritime law enforcement agencies. We commend the United Nations and its agencies, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Maritime Organization and the Office of Counter-Terrorism, as well as regional partners and friendly countries, for their cooperation with regional initiatives and encourage more of such efforts.

We recognize the invaluable support, in realizing a safer maritime space in the region, of bilateral and multilateral partners, such as the European Union, the Group of Seven Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, currently co-chaired by Germany and Côte d'Ivoire, and the Share Awareness and De-confliction group of the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Collaboration Forum.

Lastly, although the report did not identify empirical evidence of links between pirates and extremist groups, we advocate for coordinated efforts aimed at curtailing any potential linkages among extremist, terrorist and pirate groups.

At the national level, the Government of Ghana remains resolute in its commitment to implementing its obligations under regional and multilateral instruments aimed at combating the menace of piracy. We encourage other Member States to do same. The upcoming tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé Architecture provides us with a unique opportunity to leverage the recommendations of the Secretary-General's report towards enhancing the effective operationalization of the Yaoundé Architecture, including its codification. The direct and indirect costs of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea is too high for us not to succeed.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to Mr. Gonzato.

Mr. Gonzato: I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the European Union (EU).

As we approach the tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé Architecture, we welcome today's discussion in the Security Council and commend Ghana for its leadership on the issue. I want to thank the briefers for their valuable presentations and Ghana and Norway for steering the successful adoption of resolution 2634 (2022) on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea earlier this year, which, in turn, led to the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/818).

The problem of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea has wide-ranging repercussions beyond the countries and the people living in the Gulf. That is why the problem is a global one that concerns us all. We hope that the increased attention paid to the Gulf of Guinea will give new impetus to the implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct and lead to closer regional cooperation.

The Secretary-General's report highlights the enormous costs of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. The estimate of \$1.9 billion per year in direct and indirect costs gives us a concrete figure of the level of resources that should have gone into development and benefited communities. The combined costs of anti-piracy measures, fiscal revenue loss, direct damage to the shipping industry, higher insurance premiums and lower trade volumes pose a threat to the whole region. We should also consider the enormous cost of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, amounting to \$1.6 billion a year. IUU also poses a serious environmental threat to fish stocks and future livelihoods.

Other serious threats to maritime security are the trafficking in narcotics, arms and human beings, oil bunkering and petro-piracy. There is a need to better understand the links between those crimes, which also take place on land, and piracy and armed robbery at sea. While tackling piracy and armed robbery at sea requires a hands-on security approach, we must also tackle the root causes of piracy on land. That is also shown by the fact that as instances of piracy have decreased, we have seen an increase in certain illegal activities on land, such as oil bunkering. Those problems need to be addressed through an integrated approach that takes into account the need for economic development and strengthened governance in the region.

The European Union adopted a strategy for the Gulf of Guinea back in 2014, which we recently updated. The approach taken is comprehensive and reflects the European Union's long-lasting engagement at all levels — the need to address socioeconomic development, institutional and legal frameworks, as well as defence and security aspects.

We have a number of tools to tackle piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. First of all, while it may seem obvious, we should mention the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the constitution for the oceans. It has guided every aspect of maritime affairs and set out a balance of rights and duties over the past

40 years, reflecting customary international law. It is the fundamental pillar for ocean governance, as it establishes the overarching legal framework within which all activities in oceans and seas must be carried out. It is of strategic importance as the basis for national, regional and global action and cooperation in the marine sector.

Secondly, the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, which was signed in 2013, is the main regional framework for promoting cooperation around maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. The European Union actively supports individual member States and regional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, in implementing the Code of Conduct.

Thirdly, the increased naval presence in the Gulf of Guinea has proven successful in tackling piracy. We commend the efforts of Nigeria in that respect, recognizing the positive impact that the Deep Blue Project has had on suppressing piracy. In 2021, the European Union launched the Coordinated Maritime Presences in the Gulf of Guinea, meaning that the naval presence of at least one EU member State is guaranteed at any time and can be coordinated with regional and country bodies. The European Union is also considering an assistance measure under the European Peace Facility to support military actors in some coastal States.

Fourthly, there is a need to strengthen legal frameworks and institutional capacities in the region. The European Union commends those countries that have already introduced legislation that allows the prosecution of suspected pirates and urges others to follow suit. The European Union has a number of projects aimed at strengthening the institutional, legal and operational capacities in West or Central Africa, representing a total amount of €80 million.

We also commend the agreement reached by ECOWAS members on the Supplementary Act on the Conditions of Transfer of Persons Suspected of Having Committed Acts of Piracy and their Associated Property and/or Evidence. We will continue to support the legal reform that is ongoing in several coastal States of West and Central Africa. The European Union supports the Global Maritime Crime Programme of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime with €5.9 million, which contributes to strengthening the prosecution and

adjudication of maritime crimes, as well as to driving legal reforms in the countries of the Gulf of Guinea.

Finally, let me assure the Council that the European Union remains committed to supporting the countries of the Gulf of Guinea in their efforts to strengthen maritime security, based on the Gulf of Guinea Strategy and Action Plan. We especially look forward to working together on further strengthening the Yaoundé Code of Conduct as it celebrates its tenth anniversary in 2023.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Ms. Leendertse (Germany): I would like to thank the presidency of Ghana for the opportunity to speak in the Security Council today.

Ghana and Norway have been instrumental in advancing the crucial issue of maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea in the Council. At the end of May, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2634 (2022). We have heard about the progress since then from today's briefers, and I would like to thank them for their insightful remarks.

I have the honour to speak today as one of the two current co-Chairs, together with Côte d'Ivoire, of the Group of Seven Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, a multilateral coalition of countries of the region and international partners. Together, they support the Yaoundé Architecture and the implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct. Many member States represented here today are part of that coalition, which has supported the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission since 2013 in their endeavour to strengthen regional cooperation to combat piracy and other illegal activities at sea.

The Friends of the Gulf of Guinea are happy to respond to the Council's call for action on maritime security. During the last plenary meeting, held in Berlin in July, we agreed to contribute to the implementation of resolution 2634 (2022). During the meeting in Abidjan next week, we will deepen that dialogue.

A recent and important milestone in our joint efforts is the support to the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre in Cabo Verde, the most recent element in the network of subregional coordination and information-sharing centres. Germany is more than happy to continue its co-chairmanship of the

Group in 2023, as we would like to support the current momentum, deepen sustainability and foster the aforementioned positive results.

In view of the upcoming tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct and Architecture next year, the Friends of the Gulf of Guinea will focus their efforts on codification, making the Code of Conduct legally binding. Thanks to the strong ownership of the countries and organizations of the region, we are very confident that additional progress will be achieved by next summer in the fields of regional governance, operational cooperation and the harmonization of legal frameworks for maritime operations and the prosecution of piracy. The G7++ Friends of the Gulf of Guinea will support this process by providing technical assistance, training and access to financing, in close and structured collaboration with other international and regional formats, such as the European Union Coordinated Maritime Presences, Shared Awareness and Deconfliction Initiative and the Atlantic Centre in the Azores.

I will now make a few more short remarks in my national capacity. Germany realizes the relevance of combating piracy and strengthening maritime security to ensure the continued stability of the region. We will remain engaged, multilaterally and bilaterally, in supporting the countries of the Gulf of Guinea.

In addition to support for a robust and sustained regional response to the immediate risks and dangers posed by piracy and other illegal activities at sea, we also need to invest more efforts and funds in the prevention of such activities and in mitigating their effects. The root causes leading to piracy can, for example, be addressed through investments in the blue economy, creating livelihoods and economic opportunities in local coastal communities. Mitigation can be achieved by environmental protection and conservation. In this context, I would like to welcome the Peacebuilding Commission's letter of advice to the Council on maritime security.

It is important to note the concrete progress in combating piracy and strengthening maritime security in view of the wider threats to the security and stability of the region caused by terrorist groups. Germany is committed to playing its part, in close cooperation with all its partners.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Nze (Nigeria): I would like to thank the delegation of Ghana for organizing today's briefing on this very important topic. We thank the Secretary-General for his report on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea (S/2022/818) pursuant to resolution 2634 (2022) and through the good work of both Ghana and Norway. We appreciate the useful contribution made by the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly. We also want to thank the Executive Secretary of Gulf of Guinea Commission, Ambassador Florentina Adenike Ukonga, and Maritime Planning Officer of the African Union Commission, Commander Nura Abdullahi Yakubu, for their briefings.

Nigeria recognizes the importance of preserving peace, security and stability in the Gulf of Guinea for the benefit of global peace. We are committed to improving the effectiveness of our responses to tackling the threat of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and prioritize the fulfilment of obligations under the Yaoundé Code of Conduct and Architecture, which remains the most viable international cooperation and instrument to tackle piracy and other crimes at sea in the region.

Within the framework of the Deep Blue Project, we have invested over \$195 million in establishing an integrated national security and waterways-protection infrastructure, which includes maritime-security platforms. That helps us to respond rapidly to piracy, robbery, kidnapping, oil theft, smuggling, illegal trafficking of drugs and persons and other crimes within Nigeria's territorial waters and the exclusive economic zone. Furthermore, under Nigeria's Suppression of Piracy and Other Maritime Offences Act of 2019, we have been able to successfully hold perpetrators of acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea accountable for their crimes.

As noted by the Secretary-General in his report, the increases in our naval presence and criminal prosecutions have fast become deterrents to piracy in the region and are contributing positively to the current decrease in the rate of acts of piracy and armed robberies in the Gulf of Guinea. We seek to amplify these efforts through local shipbuilding to guarantee fleet availability so as to effectively carry out more inter-navy cooperation under the Yaoundé Architecture.

It is important to state that reinforcing the sovereignty of national waters within the Gulf of Guinea and protecting an important source of food for the population are vital. Accordingly, enhancing naval capacity and presence will help the region address the issue of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, which has been adversely affecting the livelihoods and opportunities of the local population in the numerous coastal communities. International partners must continue to assist States of the Gulf of Guinea with technical and material support to address this crime and help them develop their sustainable blue economies.

At the regional level, collaboration among maritime stakeholders is imperative for the effective implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct. Along with Cameroon, Nigeria co-chairs the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Collaboration Forum, which was established as a framework complementary to the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea in Yaoundé to enhance the exchange information and cooperation at sea and promote synergy between naval ships of countries of the region and those of international partners. The maritime industry understands this.

Nigeria appreciates the contributions of international partners and commercial maritime actors in improving safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea. We commend the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Group of Seven++ Friends of the Gulf of Guinea for their commitment and support for the regional architecture so that it can find solutions to maritime-security challenges in the Gulf of Guinea.

Ahead of the tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct in 2023, Nigeria pledges its unwavering commitment to its full operationalization and will work with our neighbours to enhance regional cooperation on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. Domestically, we will continue to make considerable efforts to address the root causes and drivers of piracy. We call on internal partners to explore and make meaningful technical and other future contributions towards the implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct as well as to build the capacity of the States of the Gulf of Guinea to effectively combat and prevent piracy and other security challenges facing the region.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.