Critical Maritime Routes Programme

CMR Newsletter #12 October – December 2022: CRIMARIO

23 January 2023

Addressing maritime safety and security threats through IORIS

On 6 and 7 December, more than 80 senior officials from over 25 countries from across the Indo Pacific met in Mahé, to discuss how the Indo – Pacific Regional Information Sharing Platform (IORIS) could be used to exchange information and respond effectively to maritime security threats and manage incidents at sea.

During the conference, organised at the Seychelles Coast Guard Base by CRIMARIO II, senior officials from Indian Ocean countries, together with national and international agencies and organisations involved in maritime security, analysed and discussed the main threats they face on a daily basis ranging from safety incidents such as search and rescue and pollution accidents, to piracy, terrorism at sea, trafficking in arms and human beings, irregular immigration, and Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

In his opening remarks, Martin Cauchi Inglott, CRIMARIO's Project Director, stressed that "Much is said during international fora, and written in national maritime security strategies, about the importance of exchanging information, but not much attention is given to how information is exchanged". This is why CRIMARIO worked towards developing IORIS, a neutral and secure web-based communications tool, developed by the EU funded project CRIMARIO II for use across the Indo-Pacific, the benefits including cost-effectiveness, harmonisation and comprehensiveness.

During the two-day event, participants had the opportunity of further exploring the IORIS platform through real life examples, when its new functionalities were revealed to support operators and analysts in the national and regional centres on a daily basis.

In his speech, Ambassador Michael Pulch, the European Union (EU) Senior Coordinator for Maritime Security in the North West Indian Ocean, reminded all that it was over a "4 -year period of continuous consultation with regional partners, that IORIS evolved from an information exchange tool, to one which now includes Automatic Identification System (AIS) information. And more advanced technology will be added. In the future, partners will be able to request satellite data, which will help them identify illicit activities in the open seas."

The conference was an opportunity to continue building the IORIS Community, as trust and confidence are the cornerstone of information exchange, and to bring better awareness about IORIS and what it has to offer. The presence of political, diplomatic and operational officials at the conference offered a unique setting to assess how IORIS can be used and further developed to better meet the needs of its users.

Hon. Mr. Erol Fonseka, Minister of Home Affairs, reaffirmed the Seychelles' commitment in securing the regional maritime domain, and noted how IORIS has now become a "Community of like-minded users, that are exploiting the system to intensify inter-operability among over 21 countries, 3 international organisations, NGOs and the industry". Col. Attala from the Seychelles Coast Guard remarked that, from a prime communications tool, IORIS was now good for operational coordination and is becoming a game changer in the contributions we all make to improve maritime security, peace and regional stability.

To continue to enhance and enrich the IORIS Network, to become a truly regional platform, co-owned and managed by all actors, CRIMARIO II will organise a first IORIS Steering Committee in April 2023, where active IORIS users will be invited to sit at the table.

Arrival of participants

Arrival of participants

Registration

From right to left: Erol Fonseka, Michael Pulch, Brig (Ret'd) Loonenda Naisho EBS, NDC, PSC (K); Martin Cauchi Inglott

Michael Pulch, EU Senior Coordinator for Maritime Security in the Northwest Indian Ocean

Martin Cauchi Inglott, CRIMARIO II Project Director

A programme funded by the EU

The European Union supports the Critical Maritime Routes Programme

Monitoring, Support & Evaluation

RUSI EUROPE

Rusi Europe implements the CRIMSON project that monitors, supports and evaluates the Critical Maritime Routes Programme