

Interconnecting national maritime agencies to strengthen maritime security and safety, and sustainable fisheries in the Philippines and in the wider Indo-Pacific region.

21 March 2023



On 20 and 21 March 2023, 11 maritime agencies¹ from the Philippines met in Manila and agreed to create a **National IORIS Governance structure**, to best serve the operational interests of the Philippines, IORIS being a neutral and secure information exchange and maritime coordination platform serving the needs of national agencies across the Indo-Pacific.

¹NCWC, The Philippine Navy (PN), The Philippine Coast Guard PCG, The Maritime industry authority (MARINA), The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA), The Bureau of Customs (BoC), The Philippine National Police Maritime Group PNP-MG, The Bureau of Immigration BI, The Intelligence Service Armed Forces of the Philippines, The Armed Forces of the Philippines Command Center AFPC

Once established, the structure would allow the Philippines to be integrated into the wider IORIS Community being developed to address maritime challenges, with the objectives of facilitating enhanced exchange of information with regional partners, whilst also ensuring the long-term implementation and sustainability of the platform.

The Philippines' maritime agencies have received extensive training on the IORIS platform since 2021, and its use has harmonised inter-agency information flows, promoted collaboration and trust, and enhanced interoperability between one another ever since.

With the creation of the IORIS National Governance Structure, the signatory agencies agreed to become active members of the IORIS National Board, assuring the proper functionality of the platform at national and regional levels to best serve the operational needs of its users, remaining aligned with the tool's fundamental objectives: interconnecting maritime agencies/authorities at national and regional levels to better address maritime security and safety challenges nationally and in the Indo-Pacific region, while also supporting sustainable fisheries.

Closing the event, Martin Cauchi-Inglott, CRIMARIO project director said: "The Philippines has been at the forefront of welcoming IORIS to the region, the action even commencing with intensity when COVID was at its peak. The Philippines is now set to lead the way in taking ownership of IORIS, allowing itself to drive the process internally, and bridge to external partners whenever it deems necessary. My hearty congratulations go to these most professional maritime agencies coming on board."

The event was organised by CRIMARIO, an EU funded project established in 2015 to contribute to enhancing maritime domain awareness, and which now addresses maritime security and safety threats, in collaboration with the Philippines National Coast Watch Center, an inter-agency body that provides strategic direction and formulates and promulgates policy guidelines on maritime issues and security in the country.

BACKGROUND

ABOUT THE CRITICAL MARITIME ROUTES PROGRAMME

The Critical Maritime Routes (CMR) Programme is an EU-funded programme designed to address the challenge of maritime security in different regions. The emphasis is on capacity-building on a regional level for exchange of information and cooperation. Through different initiatives and projects, including CRIMARIO, the programme aims to promote regional and trans-regional cooperation to overcome the fragmented approach that arises from different levels of capacity and interests among littoral states.

ABOUT CRIMARIO

CRIMARIO is an EU funded project established in 2015 to contribute to enhancing Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), through information sharing, capacity building and training, in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO). This was achieved through the development of the IORIS platform, a maritime coordination and communications tool for the region, coupled to extensive training programmes on maritime data processing.

In 2020 the project was extended until 2025, and its geographical reach enlarged with the ambition of inter-connecting the Indo-Pacific.

In this second phase the project aims at:

- enhancing information exchange and analysis, and crisis/incident management
- strengthening inter-agency cooperation in maritime surveillance, policing, investigation and judicial matters.

Through these objectives, **CRIMARIO** supports the implementation of the EU's Indo-Pacific strategy where the Union aims to promote an open and rules-based regional maritime architecture, because all will win through safer and more secure trade routes.

The project is implemented by Expertise France.

ABOUT IORIS

The Indo Pacific Regional Information Sharing (IORIS) platform is a secure and neutral, web-based maritime coordination and information-sharing tool for national and regional multi-agency use. In its primary function, IORIS provides maritime centres with a means to jointly plan and coordinate maritime operations, including crisis/incident management, offering enhanced information-sharing functions and strengthen interagency collaboration at national and regional levels. The platform also offers additional surveillance functionalities.

IORIS functions are flexible and can be adapted to the mandate and role of the specific centre or organisation, using capabilities including communications, geographic displays and the provision of satellite AIS data. Dedicated areas are tailor-made to manage day-to-day information-sharing and the coordination and monitoring of maritime safety and security operations, amongst civilian agencies and/or military users, depending on the needs.

IORIS incorporates the latest encrypted technologies for ensuring a robust level of security and privacy; it is only accessible to authorised users / centres / administrations designated by partner countries, maritime centres and regional organisations.

A training programme, delivered by a pool of certified instructors, ensures a smooth deployment of the platform.

At present about 40 national and regional maritime agencies from 20 countries and organisations across the Indo-Pacific use IORIS platform.