

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (spoke in French):

I should like to welcome the initiative of the Chinese presidency to convene, together with the Senegalese and Angolan delegations, this debate to discuss a topic of great importance and scope in a global context characterized by key threats to our collective security. Quite clearly, the issue of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea is a source of great concern to the countries of West and Central Africa, be they coastal or land-locked States. However, the issue necessarily has an unquestionable international dimension, given its underlying economic and geostrategic ramifications.

The Gulf of Guinea is among the regions of the world that best reflects the linkages among current global challenges. That part of the African continent's Atlantic coast is a crossroad of international maritime traffic owing to its location at the heart of networks of routes linking Africa, the Americas, Europe and Asia. However, above all the Gulf of Guinea is an area replete with diverse economic potential. Added to that are the many other resources of the continent, all of which attract the interest of both legal economic actors and the covetousness of criminals and traffickers of all types, who increasingly are developing various means that very often surpass the individual national capacities of the States of the region.

Reports available to us on this issue point to the fact that, over the past decade, the breadth of the phenomenon of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea has increased, thereby making it a significant obstacle to maritime activity by the countries of the region. Nonetheless, those activities significantly drive the economies of those countries. In recent years, the scope of organized maritime crime in the Gulf of Guinea has expanded to a worrying degree, no longer being limited to the petroleum sector. Acts of piracy, at times taking the form of increasingly bold and sophisticated raids on the high seas, are now being compounded by armed robbery, illicit fishing, human trafficking and trafficking in drugs, weapons and human beings, as well as in counterfeit medications and toxic waste. That further complicates the increasing efforts of the States of the region, with various international partners at their side. That is reflected in the various initiatives taken over the past five years in response to this challenge.

As appropriately mentioned by the Assistant Secretary-General, whom I thank for his briefing here today, a Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea was held at Yaoundé in June 2013 under the auspices of the three relevant subregional organizations. The meeting provided genuine momentum and was a tangible reflection of the collective commitment of the States of the region to address this growing threat. The process that led to the meeting illustrated the various stages of regional commitment and the international commitment underpinning it, including through the United Nations by way of the adoption of resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012), as well as presidential statement S/PRST/2013/13, which the Council adopted on the heels of the Yaoundé Summit.

The challenge before us is to establish and implement an institutional legal framework that will make it possible to undertake an effective, coordinated response by the countries of the region, as clearly emphasized at the Summit. Following the Summit, a package of strategic documents was adopted on the issue of maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea, including the Yaoundé Declaration of the Heads of State and Government of Central and West African States on Maritime Safety and Security in their Common Maritime Domain, the Code of Conduct Concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships, and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa, and the memorandum of understanding among the Economic Community of Central African States, the

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GCC) on maritime safety and security in the Central and West Africa maritime space.

In view, on the one hand, of the progress made since the Council's previous meeting on this issue (see S/PV.6723) and, on the other hand, the situation on the ground, we have reason to be satisfied with the ongoing efforts of Gulf of Guinea States and subregional organizations, which have made substantial progress in the establishment of institutions and the adoption of legal frameworks on the security architecture for maritime security. For example, the GCC and ECOWAS finalized their regional maritime strategies, respectively in August 2013 and in March 2014, under the Yaoundé Declaration, which requested those entities "to develop and adopt a regional strategy on the fight against piracy, armed robbery and other illegal activities committed at sea, in line with the African Integrated Strategy for the Seas and Oceans 2050.

The Yaoundé process also is proceeding with the gradual implementation of the pillars of the interregional architecture on maritime safety and security that serve as the axes for the coordination and harmonization of regional policies and initiatives envisaged during the Summit. Moreover, it must be recognized that the operationalization of that architecture is based on certain conditions that have yet to be met, despite the achievements we have often emphasized. That pertains in particular to the strengthening of coordination and the harmonization of legislation on the subject, which in this configuration are made to both the interstate and interregional levels. Furthermore, we note the existence of barriers to the delicate question, not yet fully resolved, of the delimitation of maritime boundaries, which can be an element of tension in the relations among the various States bordering the Gulf.

In addition, funding is a central element in the effectiveness and the operation of the entire undertaking. It should therefore be noted that, in addition to the need to mobilize and pool the resources of Gulf of Guinea States and subregional organizations, the support of technical and financial partners is indispensable for the consolidation and the sustainability of the nascent integrated maritime safety systems. In that regard, it is appropriate to commend the assistance on the technical and financial fronts on the part of partners at the bilateral and multilateral levels in support of State and regional initiatives against piracy and armed robbery. On that score we especially wish to acknowledge the contributions of the Special Trust Fund for Maritime Security in West and Central Africa, established by the International Maritime Organization.

In spite of the persistence of many challenges, regional mobilization in response to the threat posed by piracy and armed robbery at sea should be seen as a manifestation of the commitment of the States of the Gulf of Guinea to assume their responsibilities in the security sphere. Moreover, security in the region must be understood holistically, as the main causes and drivers of maritime insecurity are to be found on dry land. In truth, maritime crime is often fuelled by vast networks of illegal activities that are progressively being built on a foundation of poor governance, extreme poverty and socio-political violence. Therefore, we consider it essential to stress the links between piracy and transnational organized crime, given that this scourge is one of the major challenges that threaten the stability of countries in the region.

Moreover, given the particular security situation in West and Central Africa, we should consider seriously the possibility of the existence of connections between piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and the financing of the activities of terrorist groups operating in the region. It is also essential to consider other issues related to maritime safety and security, including the management and control of marine resources.

In the fishing sector, pressure seems to be building on available fishery resources — due mainly to the increasing number of fishing vessels that are operating and to illegal fishing. We can see that the scarcity of fish stocks tends to push small-scale, traditional fishers to ignore maritime borders and national State legislation. All of those factors constitute potential sources of conflict. It is necessary to strengthen policies and partnerships for the rational exploitation of fishery resources and for the governance and sharing of transboundary marine resources, taking into account the specificities of the States.

It is because of those various but interlinked security issues that the second Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa, held in 2015, devoted a plenary session to maritime safety. That session helped to facilitate strategic dialogue among the participants, to deepen their reflection on an integrated approach to threats on the continent, and to identify the most appropriate responses to current challenges. We are therefore of the view that the relevant guidelines arising from the Dakar Forum deserve to be endorsed by the African States and actively supported by the international community. I will mention just eight of most salient points:

First, the African approach must take into account, over and above security, the environmental, touristic and economic dimensions. Second, it is important to have an inclusive development policy that benefits communities, youth and women. Third, we must define the independent African priorities and the need for the support of international partners. Fourth, we must strengthen the legal and judicial capacities of States. Fifth, support must be given to programmes and institutions, not to mention the implementation of the Yaoundé process. Sixth, information should be collected and shared. Seventh, training and instruction on maritime issues are necessary. Finally, a maritime network should be created for a continental response and the development of a potential maritime surveillance and response.

As we can see, the dynamic is well under way on the African continent. Moreover, I reiterate that the African Union is preparing an extraordinary summit on maritime security, to be held in Lomé in October. The summit will, among other things, address the challenges and threats to maritime security, drug trafficking, money-laundering, illegal fishing and international cooperation. Senegal, of course, will participate in the meeting and actively work to ensure that it promotes a qualitative leap in the implementation process of a security architecture and operational maritime safety in Africa, and particularly in the Gulf of Guinea.

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