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Delegations will find in annex the Council conclusions on the implementation of the Coordinated Maritime Presences concept in the north-western Indian Ocean, approved by the Council at its meeting on 21 February 2022.

**COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
COORDINATED MARITIME PRESENCES CONCEPT IN
THE NORTH-WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN**

1. The Council identifies maritime security as one of the key areas for a deeper engagement by the EU and sets a number of priorities regarding the EU's security cooperation. In the context of significant challenges for the maritime dimension of the rules-based international order, the Council reaffirms the necessity to further strengthen the EU's role as a global maritime security provider, in its vicinity and beyond. This will contribute to promoting international law, in particular UNCLOS, defending the EU's interests and upholding the freedoms of the high seas, including the freedom of navigation.
2. The Council recalls its Conclusions of April 2021 on an EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, and reaffirms the strategic importance of the region, as well as the need for a meaningful European naval presence in this area. Through its Indo-Pacific Strategy, the EU aims to reinforce its strategic focus and actions in the region with a view to contributing to its stability, security and prosperity, based on the promotion of democracy, rule of law, human rights and international law. The Council reiterates the need to continue promoting an open and rules-based regional security architecture in the Indo-Pacific region, including secure sea lines of communication and an enhanced naval presence as highlighted in the Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council of September 2021 on an EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, supported by the European Council in October 2021.
3. The Council underlines that the Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP) concept contributes to maritime security as part of the EU's Integrated Approach and has proven to be an effective and useful instrument, notably regarding the optimisation of the use of EU Member States' naval assets deployed under their national chain of command in order to strengthen the EU's maritime diplomacy.

4. In this context, and taking into account relevant lessons learned from the CMP Pilot case in the Gulf of Guinea, the Council hereby launches the implementation of the CMP concept in the North-Western Indian Ocean (NWIO), by establishing a Maritime Area of Interest (MAI) covering the maritime area from the Strait of Hormuz to the Southern Tropic and from the north of the Red Sea towards the centre of the Indian Ocean. Its implementation will complement both the EU's and Member States' activities in the region, while respecting the mandate and chain of command of Operation ATALANTA, and will allow for improved synergies with relevant EU instruments and programmes, in line with the EU's Integrated Approach. Within this framework, it will also promote cooperation with partners, including by conducting joint maritime exercises and port calls, and facilitate the exchange of information, notably by making best use of the Maritime Surveillance (MARSUR) system and the Maritime Area of Interest Coordination Cell (MAICC).
5. In this regard, the Council welcomes the role of the MAICC within the EEAS in effectively facilitating coordination of the presences of EU Member States' naval assets, as well as building relevant maritime situational awareness for the EU and its Member States by enhancing the exchange of maritime security information through the MARSUR project. In this context, the Council also highlights the need to strengthen cooperation with new data exchange platforms and frameworks, useful for the implementation of the CMP, thus facilitating the exchange of maritime security information. The Council also acknowledges the need to appoint a dedicated EU Senior Coordinator for maritime security in the NWIO whose terms of reference will be further defined, and who will, under the political control and strategic direction of the PSC, facilitate the overall coherence of, and coordination between, the activities of EU actors, as well as the development and strengthening of partnerships, in close cooperation with the maritime industry.

6. On the basis of the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy and the Horn of Africa Strategy, following the EU-AU Summit, and on the eve of the Ministerial Forum for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, the Council calls for the development of a coherent overall approach to the Indian Ocean, built around a concept of inclusive cooperation with our partners in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. In the context of an updated EU Maritime Security Strategy and its action plan, the Council also considers that maritime cooperation with international and regional partners, notably the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), should be enhanced. The Council also underlines the importance of seeking local buy-in by Coastal States.
7. The Council recognises the EU's long-standing and growing role as a maritime security provider in the NWIO, in particular through the EU Naval Force – Somalia Operation ATALANTA. The existing EU naval presences and initiatives in the NWIO create a space for greater EU off-shore engagement with the regional organisations and Coastal States, and constitute a corner stone of the EU's approach to international initiatives in the Indian Ocean and a platform for cooperation in both the Red Sea and in the Western Indian Ocean. In this context, the Council reiterates that the CMP in the NWIO will be complementary to Operation ATALANTA.
8. Additionally, further to the cooperation with Operation ATALANTA which remains key, as well as other CSDP activities in the region, the Council calls for an enhanced coordination and cooperation with the European-led Maritime Awareness in the strait of Hormuz (EMASoH) initiative, while fully respecting its separate mandate and operational activity, which contributes inter alia to a safer navigational environment, freedom of navigation and de-escalation.
9. The Council recalls the need to support the development of a regional maritime security architecture on the basis of the establishment of international arrangements to ensure a shared legal framework for cooperation to address maritime security challenges in the medium term, notably through the extension of already existing arrangements beyond piracy to drug trafficking and weapons smuggling, in close cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

10. The Council underlines the necessity to work, in line with the EU's Integrated Approach, with, inter alia, platforms and projects such as, the *Enhancing Security Cooperation in and with Asia* (ESIWA) project, and with the *Critical Maritime Routes Indo-Pacific* (CRIMARIO II) project. Furthermore, this includes the *Maritime Security Programme for the Red Sea Region*, the *Maritime Security Programme* (MASE), as well as the Regional Coordination of Operations Centre (RCOC), while working closely with key security-related fora in the region such as the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium.
11. Building on these initiatives, and to further improve the overall coherence of the EU's action in the region, the Council:
- Establishes the North-Western Indian Ocean (NWIO) as a MAI;
 - Will ensure political control and provide strategic guidance for the implementation of the CMP concept in NWIO through the PSC, notably for the validation of an implementation plan, including a development of a StratCom Plan, as well as Terms of Reference for the EU Senior Coordinator;
 - Will revert to the CMP concept in NWIO at the latest by February 2024;
 - Will consider the possibility of applying the CMP concept in other potential MAIs.
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