Symposium for Public Prosecutors on Maritime Crimes

Background

Maritime crimes are an increasingly significant threat to global security, impacting national economies, sovereignty, and the safety of international shipping routes. These crimes usually include piracy, human trafficking, drug smuggling, and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Maritime law enforcement is not a linear process, but a cycle that requires a clear understanding of legal frameworks throughout all stages, from surveillance to prosecution, highlighting the need for legal input from the very beginning of maritime law enforcement efforts. While the focus has often been on the "legal finish" (prosecution and trial), this has overlooked the critical role of legal advisors in the earlier phases of operations, such as anomaly detection, analysis, and operational decision-making. This gap undermines the effectiveness of maritime operations and the subsequent legal outcomes.

In line with this perspective, the Atlantic Centre has consistently emphasized the importance of capacity building for multilateral cooperation in maritime security and fostering political dialogue. This work highlights the need for better integration of legal expertise at all stages of maritime security operations, strengthening both regional and international (Atlantic) efforts to tackle maritime crimes.

Hence, building on the last year's edition, this Symposium, organized by the Atlantic Centre, **the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre Narcotics (MAOC-N)**, **the EnMAR,** the **Portuguese Judiciary Police (PT PJ),** the **Public Prosecution Service,** in partnership with **CARICOM Impacs**, aims to, once again, bridge the gap in maritime law enforcement by equipping public prosecutors with the necessary knowledge and tools to effectively combat maritime crime.

The programme will cover both legal frameworks and operational challenges associated with prosecuting maritime crimes, looking for the best opportunity to involve prosecutors in the maritime security cycle to its conclusion. It will also be platform for regional sharing of experience and practices and peer-to-peer learning.

Objective

The main objective of this event is to help improving public prosecutors' knowledge and skills needed to:

1. **Understand Maritime Crimes**: Recognise the various forms of maritime crimes and their global (and Atlantic) impact.
2. **Navigate and Harmonize Legal Frameworks**: Familiarise participants with relevant international, regional and national legal frameworks governing maritime crimes, including agreements and conventions.
3. **Integrate Legal Advisors and prosecutors early in Operations:** Stress the importance of involving legal advisors in all phases of maritime law enforcement, from monitoring and anomaly analysis to operational decision-making.
4. **Understand the intersection between new technologies and law:,** Understand both challenges and opportunities arising from novel ways of evidence gathering and preservation;

Target Audience

Participants should ideally:

- Be public prosecutors actively involved or likely to be involved in the investigation and prosecution of maritime crimes and illegal acts (e.g., piracy, trafficking, IUU fishing, drug smuggling).
- Be legal advisors embedded in or supporting national maritime agencies, regional organizations (e.g., ECOWAS, ECCAS, GGC), or international maritime security initiatives.
- Work with national or regional Maritime Operational Centres, Coast Guards, Port Authorities, or Judiciary Police units specialized in transnational organized crime or environmental crime.
- Have experience in cross-border or international legal cooperation, particularly within the Atlantic Basin.

Methodology

- Lectures and Presentations: Delivered by experts from the MAOC-N, Portuguese Judiciary Police, Public Prosecution Service, CARICOM Impacs, regional and international law enforcement agencies, and maritime legal professionals.

- Case Studies: Real-world examples, particularly from the Atlantic region, will be used to analyse the challenges and successes in prosecuting maritime crimes.
- Interactive Discussions: Facilitated sessions where participants can engage with each other and promote best practices sharing.

Expected Outcomes

By the end of the event, participants will:

1. Deepen their understanding of maritime crimes and their global and Atlantic impact.
2. Improve integration of legal advisors into early stages of maritime operations, ensuring that legal considerations are tailored into all phases of enforcement.
3. Enhance investigative capabilities, particularly in evidence collection and preservation at sea.
4. Strengthen cooperation with regional and international partners to address maritime crimes more effectively.

Conclusion

The success of maritime law enforcement hinges on the integration of legal advisors throughout the entire cycle of operations, from the detection of anomalies to the final legal adjudication.

By aligning the existing knowledge with the resources and expertise from the Atlantic Centre, MAOC-N, Judiciary Police, EnMAR+, Public Prosecution Service, CARICOM Impacs, and Regional Law Enforcement agencies, this programme will provide public prosecutors, Atlantic Centre signatory states and partners, with a comprehensive understanding of maritime crime prosecution. It will ensure they are better prepared to engage in all phases of maritime law enforcement, from initial surveillance to the final prosecution, thereby contributing to a more robust and coordinated global response to maritime crime.