



UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA
FACULTY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

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SAFEGUARDING NIGERIA'S BLUE ECONOMY POTENTIALS: The Role of the Nigerian Navy

Delivered by:

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SAFEGUARDING NIGERIA'S BLUE ECONOMY POTENTIALS: THE ROLE OF NIGERIAN NAVY



by Vice Admiral El Ogalla AM GSS psc fdc(+) Chief of the Naval Staff
at the 2024 Distinguished Annual Public Lecture
of Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Nigeria
on 31 October 2024

INTRODUCTION

1. It is with great honour and a deep sense of responsibility that I stand before you today as the Guest Speaker for the Faculty of the Social Sciences' Distinguished Annual Public Lecture 2024. I am particularly delighted to be invited to this prestigious platform, which has, over the years, brought together leading minds from academia, government, and industry to engage in critical discussions that shape our nation's future. The Faculty's dedication to bridging the gap between "town" and "gown" through thoughtful discourse on matters of peace, security, and national development is both commendable and necessary. As someone who has dedicated a significant part of my career to safeguarding Nigeria's maritime domain, I am especially pleased to contribute to this ongoing dialogue. I look forward to sharing insights on the maritime security and the vital role it plays in the economic stability and development of our great nation as I speak on the topic **Safeguarding Nigeria's Blue Economy Potentials: The Role of the Nigerian Navy.**

2. The maritime domain plays a vital role in sustaining global supply chains and driving economic productivity. It is estimated that goods and services valued at approximately 2.5 trillion US dollars are transported annually by sea, representing about 5 per cent of global GDP. According to the 2022 World Bank Group report, economic activities within the maritime sector could contribute about 3 trillion US dollars each year, with the potential to generate over 40 million jobs by 2030. This economic interdependence within the maritime environment underpins the concept of the Blue Economy.

3. The Blue Economy refers to the sustainable utilisation of marine resources, including sectors such as fisheries, tourism, and offshore energy exploration. However, despite its immense potential, the maritime domain is not without its challenges. It remains vulnerable to various threats that pose significant risks to global economic stability. Maritime crimes encompass a wide range of illicit activities prohibited under both international and national laws. These crimes increase shipping costs, disrupt





trade, and contribute to economic instability and financial uncertainty. As a result, nations are committed to addressing these issues through comprehensive security and safety initiatives. Nigeria, with its vast potential and resources within the Blue Economy, is no exception.

4. Since its inception in 1956, the Nigerian Navy has been tasked with safeguarding the nation's maritime domain, as mandated by Section 217 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended). The Navy's policing responsibilities, further defined by Section 1(4)(a) of the Armed Forces Act, include enforcing customs laws, anti-bunkering measures, fishery regulations, immigration laws, and both national and international maritime laws. These duties, typically associated with coast guard functions, are carried out alongside the Navy's military roles. Despite its efforts to combat maritime crimes, challenges to maritime security in Nigeria persist. The purpose of this presentation, therefore, is to discuss the Nigerian Navy's efforts in ensuring maritime security and maximising the potentials of Nigeria's Blue Economy.

SCOPE

5. The presentation would cover the following:
- Overview of the Blue Economy in Nigeria.
 - Dynamics of Maritime Crimes in Nigeria.
 - Nigerian Navy Operational Responses in Combating Maritime Crimes.
 - Challenges Facing the Nigerian Navy in Combating Maritime Crimes.
 - Way Forward to Checking Maritime Crimes for Enhanced Blue Economy in Nigeria.

OVERVIEW OF THE BLUE ECONOMY IN NIGERIA

6. Nigeria's maritime environment is defined by a combination of international and national regimes. Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Nigeria has sovereign rights over 12 nautical miles of Territorial Sea and jurisdictional claims to 200 nautical miles of Exclusive Economic Zone. With a coastline of 420 nautical miles, this translates to about 5,040 square nautical miles of sovereign territory and 84,000





square nautical miles of Exclusive Economic Zone. The United Nations' decision to extend Nigeria's Continental Shelf to 220 nautical miles further expands the country's maritime jurisdiction to approximately 92,400 square nautical miles. This maritime area is comparable to more than one-third of Nigeria's total landmass, over which the country can exercise exclusive rights to minerals and marine resources. Additionally, Nigeria's maritime environment includes inland waterways spanning approximately 10,000 km of creeks/rivers, of which about 3,800 km are navigable year-round. These waterways provide vital access to 28 of Nigeria's 36 states and connect to 6 neighbouring countries: Benin Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Chad, Soa Tome and Principe, and Niger Republic. Nigeria's maritime domain also has the most fertile hydrocarbon provinces in the world, underscoring its strategic importance.

7. Nigeria's maritime domain is rich in resources such as manganese nodules, copper and fisheries. Most importantly, crude oil accounts for about 8 percent of Nigeria's GDP and 77 per cent of total exports. According to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Limited, the country's oil and gas assets are valued at over 40 billion dollars and projected to increase to 120 billion dollars in the near future. Nigeria's maritime domain holds an estimated 36 billion barrels of oil and 182 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves. It has capacity to produce around 2.4 million barrels of oil and 8 billion cubic feet of gas per day. The area also hosts several oil-producing and storage platforms, including approximately 5,779 oil wells, 9,717 km of pipelines, 112 flow stations, 16 gas plants and 126 production platforms.

8. In addition to oil and gas activities, Nigeria's inland waterways are vibrant corridors of economic activities. The National Inland Waterways Authority revealed that transportation along the waterways could generate about \$1.2 billion annually. Other economic activities, such as tourism, agriculture, and power generation, further contribute to socio-economic and national development. The ongoing construction project of the Coastal Highway from Lagos to Calabar could expand the frontiers of opportunities within Nigeria's Blue Economy. However, the evolving dynamics of maritime crimes could negatively affect the prospects, hence the need for pragmatic solutions to address the threats.





DYNAMICS OF MARITIME CRIMES IN NIGERIA

9. Maritime crimes in Nigeria are rooted in complex socio-economic contentions, particularly between oil-producing communities and oil companies. Additionally, factors such as unemployment, poverty, and proliferation of small arms and light weapons create a vicious cycle of maritime crimes. These issues manifest in a range of illegal activities, including communal conflicts, piracy, armed robbery at sea, kidnapping for ransom, vessel hijacking and economic sabotage. Other significant threats include human trafficking, Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, illegal oil bunkering, smuggling and militancy. Attacks on oil and gas installations, as well as key infrastructure, pose formidable internal security threats. Crude oil theft, pipeline vandalism, and the operation of illegal artisanal refineries further exacerbate these challenges, threatening Nigeria's ability to fully harness the potentials of its Blue Economy.

10. Maritime crimes are also transnational in nature and often involve local accomplices and collaborators. These crimes cause disruption of economic activities and deprive the nation of much-needed revenue for development. To prevent these crimes and mitigate the negative impact on Nigeria's Blue Economy potentials, the Nigerian Navy has diverse operational strategies/responses.

NIGERIAN NAVY OPERATIONAL RESPONSES IN COMBATING MARITIME CRIMES

11. I will dwell on the Maritime Strategy of the Nigerian Navy, its operational responses and future plans. **Permit me at this point to take a few minutes to give you a peek view of the conduct of Nigerian Navy Operations (Video of Nigerian Navy Operational Activities).**

NIGERIAN NAVY'S MARITIME STRATEGY

12. The Nigerian Navy conceptualized a multi-layered Total Spectrum Maritime Strategy to project power across a wide range of threats in order to achieve national strategic goals. Objectives of the strategy are to secure, deter and strike against internal spoilers, non-state actors as well as external aggressors by establishing a credible, balanced fleet capable of both offensive and defensive postures. This strategy





is built on proactive, layered responses across 5 key spectrums; Backwaters Operations, Territorial Waters, Exclusive Economic Zone, Out-of-Area Operations, and Land Operations. These responses are coordinated through a mutually reinforcing Trinity-of-Action Concept, which emphasizes Surveillance, Response Capabilities, and Law Enforcement.

13. **Surveillance Capability.** Nigerian Navy conducts continuous surveillance of the nation's maritime space using its Maritime Domain Awareness infrastructure, which complements surface vessels and air assets. This infrastructure includes the Regional Maritime Awareness Capability and Falcon Eye Alignment Systems, which consist of satellite-based surveillance, coastal radars and cameras deployed along Nigeria's coastline. These systems enable real-time monitoring of vessels, allowing for identification of vessels involved in illegal activities. For instance, the systems have detected several vessels attempting to load crude oil and Liquefied Natural Gas at offshore terminals without approval. The Navy's ability to detect and arrest offending vessels and their crew demonstrates its readiness and capability to combat maritime crimes, thereby safeguarding the nation's Blue Economy potentials.

14. **Response Capability.** A response capability comprising the right mix of surface and air assets, is essential for interdiction and arrest of Vessels of Interest in maritime security operations. To enhance its response capacity, the Nigerian Navy acquired several capital ships, boats and air assets. The indigenous construction of Seaward Defence Boats at the Naval Dockyard has also been strengthened. To date, 3 variants of these boats have been produced and commissioned, with the fourth and fifth variant currently under construction and expected to be completed next year. Additionally, 2 hydrographic survey ships, joined the fleet in May 2021 and 2024. Acquisition of a Landing Ship Transport, Nigerian Navy Ship KADA, further enhances our ability to project naval power and support non-kinetic operations both within the region and beyond. Several other vessels and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles are expected to join the fleet before the end of the year. These platforms will significantly bolster the Navy's response capability in curbing maritime threats towards preserving our Blue Economy potentials for economic prosperity.

15. **Law Enforcement.** Effective law enforcement in the maritime domain requires coordinated efforts of multiple agencies, each with distinct but interconnected roles. In this regard, the Nigerian Navy played a crucial role in the passage of the Suppression of





Piracy and Other Maritime Offences Act in 2019. This legal framework strengthens collaboration with Maritime Law Enforcement Agencies, enabling prosecution of maritime offenders. The Navy also contributed to the promulgation of the Harmonized Standard Operating Procedures on Arrest, Detention, and Prosecution of Vessels and Persons in Nigeria's Maritime Environment. The document outlines procedures for arrest, detention and handover of vessels in accordance with best practices. These initiatives underscore the Navy's commitment to enforcing maritime law, which is vital to the growth of Nigeria's Blue Economy.

NIGERIAN NAVY'S OPERATIONAL RESPONSES

16. **Anti-Piracy and Sea Robbery Operations.** Following series of operations to maintain credible presence at sea, incidents of piracy and sea robbery in Nigerian waters reduced considerably. Our operational responses led to Nigeria's exit from list of piracy prone countries according to International Maritime Bureau Global Piracy Report of 3 March 2022. I am glad to inform this audience that this feat has been sustained from 2022 till date and there has been no piracy incident recorded. Notwithstanding, there are still sea robbery cases of boats attacked within the Niger Delta area and the Navy is not relenting to curb these criminalities.

17. **Anti-(Crude) Oil Theft Operations.** The Nigerian Navy conducts various operations to fight oil theft and illegal oil bunkering. These operations include the Choke Point Management and Control Regime involving deployment of armed personnel in houseboats at designated river entrances and estuaries within the creeks. Also, Operation "DELTA SANITY" was activated in January 2024 and has been boosted with the integration of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles to enhance situational awareness. Since the launch of the Operation, oil thieves have been denied substantial amount of crude oil and illegally refined products worth Billions of Naira. Furthermore, over 35 ships and 65 suspects were arrested, while 827 illegal refining sites were deactivated.

18. **Anti-Smuggling Operations.** The Nigerian Navy's Op CALM WATERS II and Op TRI-PARTITE Joint Border Patrol, has recorded significant achievements. Specifically, several bags of foreign parboiled rice smuggled in wooden boats worth over 30 billion Naira were intercepted. The operation also recorded seizure of bags of Cannabis Sativa, believed to be catalyst for crimes and violence. Curbing smuggling within the nation's





maritime domain remains crucial to Nigerian Navy's drive to contribute to the growth of Nigeria's Blue Economy.

19. **Anti-Illegal Unreported Unregulated Fishing Operations.** Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing is a global threat to ocean ecosystems, food security and national income, which are foundational to the Blue Economy. The Nigerian Navy Anti-IUUF Operations arrested several fishing vessels for various offences and were appropriately handed over to the Department of Fisheries in the Federal Ministry of Agriculture. The Anti-IUUF Operations in protecting the nation's fish resources against poaching has been successful towards development of our Blue Economy.

20. **Regional/International Cooperation.** The Nigerian Navy is involved in regional maritime security collaborative engagements under the auspices of the 2013 Yaoundé Code of Conduct, which prioritises cooperation and information sharing between navies of the ECOWAS and the ECCAS. To this end, navies of ECOWAS Zone E, comprising Benin Republic, Nigeria, Togo and the Gendarmeries of Niger Republic endorsed an MOU for combined patrols of their maritime domain. We have sustained hosting of International Maritime Conference and Regional Maritime Exercise every 2 years since 2016. The Navy also collaborates with the International Police for actionable intelligence as well as the European Union via the European Union Strategy and Action Plan for the Gulf of Guinea to address transnational organised crimes in West and Central Africa. These multinational synergies are necessary to enhance maritime security for safeguarding the enormous potentials of the nation's Blue Economy.

21. **Enhanced Hydrographic Operations.** The Nigerian Navy's state-of-the-art Hydrographic Ships have been involved in systematic survey of Nigerian waters, which culminated into production of updated navigational charts and publications. The availability of these updated navigational charts boosts mariners' confidence and ensures a more secure environment for legitimate businesses to thrive. It is also worthy to note that the President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, recently approved operationalisation of the National Hydrographic Agency and appointed the Hydrographer of the Nigerian Navy as the Hydrographer of the Federation/CEO of the Agency. This development further repositions the Nigerian Navy to support the Federal Government's commitment towards development and preserving Nigeria's Blue Economy.





22. **Future Initiatives.** Nigerian Navy future initiatives include acquisition of combat helicopters and strategic military drones to bolster her Air Arm. The Navy is also in the process of acquiring Fast Patrol Boats, Tugboats and Patrol Crafts, among other assets. We are set to take delivery of two 76-meter High Endurance Offshore Patrol Vessels from Dearsan Shipyard in Turkey, which would augment long-range patrol within the region and beyond. To strengthen presence in critical areas, the Nigerian Navy plans to construct 20 additional houseboats to enhance the Choke Point security architecture, which plays a crucial role in monitoring internal waterways. We are also progressing with plans to construct Tactical Logistics Depot Facilities in our Forward Operating Bases. These acquisitions will significantly enhance the Navy's capacity to conduct extensive maritime security operations. While these initiatives reflect the Navy's commitment to enhancing operational readiness and maritime security, there are some challenges which will require sustained efforts and strategic solutions.

CHALLENGES FACING THE NIGERIAN NAVY IN COMBATING MARITIME CRIMES

23. Within the context of this discourse some of the challenges are non-diligent prosecution of maritime crimes and limited support from communities.

NON-DILIGENT PROSECUTION OF MARITIME CRIMES

24. The Nigerian Navy and other Law Enforcement agencies have made commendable efforts in arrest and prosecution of maritime offenders. However, inadequacies such as prolonged trial periods are being exploited by criminals. This has led to protracted litigation and several abandoned vessels across Nigerian Navy Bases. Out of 569 vessels arrested between 2015 to date, 250 were handed over to prosecuting agencies, yet only 82 have been successfully prosecuted, leaving a balance of 168 still in Nigerian Navy custody. The Nigerian Navy expends enormous resources to preserve and keep afloat these detained vessels.

25. The Nigerian Navy does not prosecute maritime crime suspects in civil courts but relies on other agencies. The Ministry of Defence and external solicitors are retained in this regard. Absence of Nigerian Navy lawyers in court contributes to inadequate expert knowledge required to ensure diligent prosecution. In the last 6 years, the Nigerian Navy has lost a significant number of cases for non-diligent prosecution by





these prosecuting agencies. The navy has also expended over N500 million for legal services for private lawyers at the expense of essential infrastructure to combat maritime crimes towards safeguarding the nation's Blue Economy potentials.

LIMITED SUPPORT FROM COMMUNITIES

26. Maritime crimes originate from coastal communities. Without information and support from these communities, it would be difficult to combat maritime crimes. The effect of limited support from communities is that crimes often go unreported making it difficult to gather data to identify crime patterns and track criminals.

27. Limited community support makes maritime criminals more emboldened, knowing they may not be reported or caught. Records indicate that the Navy has arrested over 4,606 suspects for various maritime crimes between 2015 and 2024. Most of these arrests were carried out in communities within the riverine areas. This complicates maritime law enforcement efforts and poses a significant challenge to maritime security. It also underscores the need for comprehensive, society-wide solutions to address root causes of maritime criminality, which threatens successful exploitation of Blue Economy potentials in Nigeria.

WAY FORWARD TO CHECKING MARITIME CRIMES FOR ENHANCED BLUE ECONOMY IN NIGERIA

28. The proposed way forward includes designation of special courts for maritime crimes, advocacy campaign for community support and socioeconomic crime prevention strategies.

DESIGNATION OF SPECIAL COURTS FOR MARITIME CRIMES

29. Establishing special courts dedicated to maritime crimes, would lead to more effective and efficient justice delivery, ultimately resulting in better outcomes for law enforcement. Judges and court staff assigned to these special courts would develop knowledge and expertise in handling maritime crime cases, which would enhance quality of judicial decisions. This would streamline legal procedures, reduce delays and ensure that cases are processed more efficiently.





30. Moreover, special courts would ensure consistent application of laws and sentencing, thereby reducing disparities and promoting fairness in the judicial processes. They would alleviate caseloads of general courts and reduce congestion, contributing to a more responsive and timely justice system. It would also increase public trust by demonstrating clear commitments to addressing maritime crimes, thereby emplacing confidence in the justice system. The speedy prosecution of maritime crimes will also improve data collection and analysis, which are crucial for policy and legislative formulation in combating maritime crimes, for the development of our Blue Economy.

ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN FOR COMMUNITY SUPPORT

31. The perceived lack of enthusiasm among communities in supporting efforts to combat maritime crimes and promote the Blue Economy is concerning and requires urgent improvement. A strategic advocacy campaign, utilizing federal, state and local mass communication platforms, could be instrumental in building public awareness, establish trust and understanding as well as support for the Nigerian Navy and other security agencies.

32. This could involve community engagement and outreach programs, educational initiatives, workshops and partnerships with stakeholders. Messages that emphasize importance of security agencies in maintaining public safety and national security, as well as the critical roles of public support could be delivered through this medium. The campaign will significantly enhance community support for the Nigerian Navy with a positive impact to combat maritime crimes and contribute to development of the Blue Economy.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGIES

33. Many individuals view maritime crimes as a means of livelihood. To address this, it is essential to implement socio-economic crime prevention strategies that focus on tackling root causes of crime, such as poverty, inequality and social exclusion. Improving social and economic conditions can reduce the likelihood of individuals resorting to criminal behaviour and decrease the incidence of maritime criminality.





34. In developing socio-economic crime prevention strategies, emphasis could be placed on enhancing skills to combat unemployment. Economic empowerment initiatives, such as microfinance programs, entrepreneurship support and social enterprise development can help to reduce crimes. Welfare programs for healthcare delivery, housing and social services are equally important. Moreover, efforts to ensure food security and reduce social exclusion would be valuable in mitigating factors that contribute to criminal activities and by extension, the escalation of maritime crimes. These initiatives are vital for supporting the development of the Blue Economy in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

35. The Blue Economy is crucial to the economic prosperity of Nigeria, particularly as our population grows and global supply chain becomes increasingly integrated. However, this growth also brings a multidimensional increase in maritime crimes. The Nigerian Navy has demonstrated a strong commitment to ensuring a secure environment necessary to safeguard the nations Blue Economy potentials. However, continued success of these efforts will require increased support and collaboration from all stakeholders. Ladies and Gentlemen let me use this opportunity to thank you for your attention and remind you of the collective responsibility we share in safeguarding our Blue Economy potentials for prosperity of Nigeria. May God continue to bless our dear country and as we proudly say in the Nigerian Navy, Onward Together.





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