

CONCEPT NOTE: PUBLIC ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Presented by UNODC (Maritime Crime Programme, Africa) & SIGLA, Stellenbosch University

Caught between AIMS-2050 and Lomé: Why do African states still not care about the seas and oceans?

In 2014 the African continent's age of seablindness was officially declared to be over. The African Union adopted its grand strategy for the seas and oceans, the African Integrated Maritime Strategy (AIMS 2050). The strategy struck a remarkable balance between development, environmental and security concerns. It was also a grand master plan of how African states could work towards and achieve better governance of maritime spaces by 2050. Yet, soon it was realized that the plan didn't unfold as expected. Some blamed it on the lack of resources, other mourned that the relation between the African Union's efforts and those of the sub-regional communities hadn't been adequately considered, or it was suggested that there was a lack of political buy in to the strategy. For others, the problem was that AIMS was "just" a strategy, and not a legally binding document. Hence, they argued that not a strategy, but a formally ratified legal charter would do the trick. The outcome was the negotiation of the Lomé Charter on maritime security and safety concluded with much public noise in 2016. It turned out that international law wasn't the problem. Negotiating a new document offered some distraction, but it hardly produced the intended outcomes or put African states on a new road of improving ocean governance, maritime security and resource management. While some of the regional communities have made significant progress, others have not. In many states the maritime, despite all the rhetoric, continues to have little priority.

This public round table takes stock of the debate and asks what the problems and potential solutions are: Why do African states and regions not make more efforts in managing and securing their seas? Is it because of all the other problems, from poverty to violence to corruption that African states and regions are facing? Is it too difficult to convince voters that maritime spaces matter? Is it the lack of leadership or of knowledge and capacities? Are there too many administrative hurdles or too little international support? Is it a concern with blue grabbing, that the benefits of the blue economy end up in the hands of big corporations? Or is it perhaps that AIMS and the Lomé Charter are badly drafted and just offer too little guidance and direction?

Date: 26 September 2019 - **Time:** 16:30-1800

Venue: Protea Hotel, Technopark, Stellenbosch [\[Map\]](#)

Discussion leader: Prof Christian Bueger, Copenhagen University

Participants:

- Dr Michelle Nel (SIGLA & Stellenbosch University)
- Retired Rear Admiral Derek Christian (South African Navy)
- Capt(SAN) Mark Blaine (SIGLA & Stellenbosch University)
- Mr Tim Walker (Institute for Security Studies-Pretoria)

RSVP: Professor F. Vreÿ at fvrey@sun.ac.za or 0825934225 by 18 September 2019