

## W.African coastal states responsible for maritime 'armed robberies'

According to the UN Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), in July last year President Boni Yayi of Benin sent a worried letter to the UN secretary-general. Pirate activities were scaring shipping away from the ports on which Benin's revenues depend.

He asked for international help of the kind which had been deployed against piracy off the coast of Somalia. President Yayi's letter put the issue of piracy off the West African coast onto the world agenda.

Coventry University then organised, in collaboration with London's Chatham House, a conference on Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea. During deliberations, it became clear that the kind of international naval deployment used against Somali pirates is unlikely to help West African states.

IRIN reports that the International Maritime Organization's (IMO's) Chris Trelawny suggested that most of what was going on in West African waters was not really piracy at all, as they were not committed in international waters. "Outside (the 12 mile territorial limits it) is piracy. If it's inside 12 miles we classify that as armed robbery against ships," and then it is the coastal state's responsibility, Trelawny said.

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