

# Watertight laws needed to fight piracy

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10 Mar 2009

African states must introduce water tight laws against piracy if they want to effectively combat the threat to the continent's coast. Speaking at the third Sea Power for Africa Symposium currently underway in Cape Town, Paul Musili Wambua, a Kenyan researcher, said there was a need for regional cooperation and tough legislation to be put in place to effectively prosecute pirates.

“Countries must jealously guard their maritime against pirates and governments must give their navies support to enable them to carry out their duties more effectively,” said Wambua.

A lack of regional cooperation in safeguarding maritime will remain a stumbling block to safeguarding maritime and that would contribute in the number of pirates increasing, he said.

He pointed out that there was a lack of appropriate policy, legal and institutional frameworks for governance of the maritime zones.

African countries are battling poaching, arms and drug smuggling, human trafficking, piracy and other activities of organised crime syndicates.

Approximately 95% of all the world's trade is conducted via the sea.

According to International Maritime Organisation, in the first quarter of 2008, there were 11 piracy attacks off the East African coast, 23 in the second quarter and 50 in the third and 51 in the fourth quarters, making a total of 135 attacks, 44 hijackings and the kidnapping of more than 600 seafarers.

Recent incidences of hijacking were reported off the coast of Somalia where ships were hijacked and a large ransom demanded for their release. Somalia has the longest coastline in Africa measuring approximately 3,898km of which 1,204km is in the Gulf of Aden.

Rear Admiral OS Ibrahim of the Nigerian Navy said combating maritime threats in African waters required systems that would ensure that African countries have adequate capacity to exercise control over its maritime domain.

“The need for security is a mutual interest requiring the cooperation of industry and government,” he said, adding that the role for African navies may have to be reviewed to advance Africa's maritime interests.

Being held under the theme “Towards effective maritime governance for Africa”, the symposium seeks to find better and effective ways of dealing with illegal activities in the seas.

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