

EUCAP Nestor Support to the rebuilding and modernisation of the Somaliland Coast Guard – Seeking Gender Balance in the years ahead

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Introduction

In this article I hope to lift the veil about what EUCAP Nestor – a European Maritime Capacity Building Mission¹ – is trying to achieve in support of the Somaliland Coast Guard. I will start by briefly explaining what the mission aims to deliver, and then I will talk in more detail about the Joint Action Plan for Somaliland, the Somaliland Vision for its Future Coast Guard and Maritime Education and Awareness. *And finally*, I will zoom in on the need to improve the current Gender Balance within the Coast Guard, particularly in light of Beijing +20, where progress towards the Beijing Declaration, and the Platform for Action will be reviewed by governments and civil societies around the world from 9 -20 March, 2015 in New York.² The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995, the UNSCR 1325, and within the European Union the promotion of gender equality is at the heart of European social and economic policies. All these high-level documents provide a powerful blueprint for advancing women. The actions set out under the 12 critical areas of concern are still highly relevant, and provides a useful guideline for advancing women in all aspects of life. The International Maritime Organisation (IMO), which is a UN Agency has recently released a video “Making Waves: Women leaders in the maritime world” to promote the advancement of women in shipping and in support of International Women’s Day 2015. With this context, I write this timely article.

I realise that the article does contain some very ‘technical and maritime terms’, but don’t be discouraged or frightened, just read on! It is important that the population in Somaliland does recognise the riches that are ‘hidden’ in the sea, be this fish for consumption and export, or the potential future oil exploration opportunities. But also port development and enhanced opportunities for coastal trade within Somaliland, tourism and the hospitality sector can benefit greatly from a safe and secure, well governed and well developed ‘maritime sector’.

But, as with many things, before the available and potential revenues can start to flow in earnest and benefit Somaliland’s development, it is also necessary to realise the important role for a well organised, effective Coast Guard organisation! As the title suggests, there is a definite role for women in the maritime sector, and also within the Somaliland Coast Guard.

EUCAP Nestor Mission Statement

The EUCAP NESTOR mission is to assist countries in the Horn of Africa and the Western Indian Ocean in strengthening their maritime security capacity in order to

¹<http://www.eucap-nestor.eu/>

²<http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/about>

enable them to fight piracy more effectively. Since autumn 2014, the EUCAP NESTOR activities have a primary focus on Somalia and Somaliland. In order to achieve our mission and looking specifically at Somaliland, the EUCAP NESTOR team based in the Field Office in Hargeisa shall dedicate its efforts towards:

- Enhance the capacity of Somaliland to exert effective maritime governance over its coastline, territorial sea and exclusive economic zone;
- Support Somaliland in taking ownership of the fight against piracy in accordance with the rule of law and human rights standards;
- Strengthen regional cooperation and the coordination of maritime security.

To plan and streamline these broader objectives, a so-called *Joint Action Plan for Somaliland* has been developed. This Joint Action Plan is a 'living document' and it will be continuously adjusted to reflect the realities 'on the ground' in Somaliland; new, emergent requirements but also the progress that has been achieved. The initial *end state* (our first, short term goal) is defined by the declaration that the Somaliland Coast Guard has achieved the status of '*Limited Initial Operational Capability*'. The goal is to achieve this initial end state by the end of 2016, but as the words 'limited' and 'initial' imply, much more is needed thereafter and the years to come! The Joint Action Plan is a 'bottom-up' approach, written in collaboration with Somaliland experts, and fully aligned with *Somaliland's Vision 2030*, the *National Development Plan (2012 -2016)* across multiple – maritime related – sectors, and the *Somaliland Special Arrangement (2013-2016)*.

Above all, the Joint Action Plan serves the purpose to contribute towards the development of a comprehensive Somaliland *Operational Concept* for coastal law enforcement and policing which includes Search and Rescue at sea and response options to contingencies and natural disasters. In many ways it also serves as a phased *Transition Plan* that provides national guidance on the scope and priorities necessary to take the current Somaliland Coast Guard towards an effective and sustainable Future Coast Guard organisation. It will aim to use multiple pathways to achieve the aforementioned Limited Initial Operational Capability by December 2016.

This process will be foremost *demand driven*, in other words the respective Somaliland authorities present their ministerial and/or departmental viewpoints and philosophies with regard to achieving enduring maritime safety and security in Somaliland waters. These ministerial viewpoints will subsequently be merged and reflected in the Somaliland Vision for its Future Coast Guard. An important milestone was achieved on 14 January 2015, when the Minister of Interior endorsed the recommendations for the restructuring of the Coast Guard Headquarters and the Fleet Units. This will now serve as a baseline for further study aimed to realise achieving Limited Initial Operational Capability.

Clearly, this process will span many years, well beyond the end of 2016; and progress will need to be periodically judged and evaluated. The Somaliland Vision for the Future Coast Guard will also take into consideration national planning projects where these have the potential to directly or indirectly impact on the organisation and missions for

the Coast Guard. For instance port development and expansion projects, free trade zones, and new logistic corridors for intermodal landside connections from other regions to a seaport such as Berbera. Put in simple terms: when more and larger ships start to visit Berbera, the Coast Guard must be ready to face these challenges from the start. If it is not, shipping companies that operate bigger vessels may be reluctant to start using Berbera for commercial purposes! In a similar vein, referring to the hospitality sector, the coast and immediate hinterland of Somaliland offers potential for aquatic sports and holidays, but only when the environment is deemed safe and secure! And that's where the Coast Guard (and the Police) have an important role to play

Littoralisation – Moving towards the coast

It is not unlikely that in the future we can start to witness – also in Somaliland – that more people start moving towards the coastal region. There are many reasons why people will start doing this, but it is foremost for economic reasons. This process is called 'Littoralisation', and means as much as the propensity for cities to cluster on coastlines. Whilst this will not happen overnight in Somaliland, it is a factor that must be kept in mind when looking ahead, and mapping the future urban and socio-economic requirements for Somaliland in the next decennium.

Littoralisation, urbanisation, connectedness and population growth are all drivers for increased licit trade when properly governed. However, when not properly governed, illicit trade and associated activities will have a chance to thrive, and by implication affect the daily operations of Somaliland law enforcement agencies, both ashore and at sea.

Perhaps unfortunate, but at the moment the opposite of 'Littoralisation' can also be observed in the remote coastal parts of Somaliland: the hard living conditions along the coast with extreme temperatures and strong winds, and the lack of basic infrastructure and communal facilities drive small coastal communities away from the coast. Given the dynamics of the region, there is a risk that such remote areas will create shelter and become sanctuaries for illegal activities to take place and become de facto ungoverned spaces. This reinforces the need to be able to effectively police these remote littoral areas, both on the shore and at sea. This particular requirement will put a significant strain on the Future Coast Guard and other law enforcement agencies; and concepts for effective control must be developed at an early stage, despite the current capability and budgetary shortfalls.

One of these concepts is called the 'Littoral Community Engagement & Development Concept'. The concept is also aimed at reinforcing measures with regard to Immigration and Border Management and Counter and Human-Trafficking of people (*Taahrib – in the Somaliland context*), weapons, narcotics, money and protected animal species; and support Government influence in the more remote region and improve transparency on taxable revenues. The concept also neatly links into the '*Maritime Communications and Coastal Safety Initiative*' which is a new Coastal Safety Project aimed to provide regional fishermen and seafarers with communication equipment which enables them to use these communications when in distress. The concept further opens the door to

investigate the value of introducing Community Liaison Officers Teams within the organisation of the Somaliland Coast Guard. Such mixed male/female teams would regularly visit coastal communities and render assistance where needed; or convey any 'required action' to the appropriate authorities.

Somaliland Vision for the Future Somaliland Coast Guard

The Somaliland Vision for the Future Coast Guard is an authoritative statement of the envisaged Coast Guard: its key tasks and responsibilities, organisational structure (such as its Headquarters and the Fleet Units), and its relationships with national ministries and departments. It provides guidance on the staffing levels of the Headquarters: how many people work there on a daily or part-time bases, male or female, uniformed or 'not in uniform'. It also describes the necessary supporting and enabling functions and mechanisms such as training and education facilities, career management, retirement policies et cetera. Where possible, the Vision includes guidance on the envisaged short and medium term priorities and a phased Transition Plan with associated timeline to achieve these priorities.

As alluded above, the Vision must take into consideration national planning projects that may impact on Coast Guard operations and above all the available resource envelope (the money available) for the foreseeable future. This Vision needs to be translated into actionable and sustainable components, such as Concepts and Tactical Procedures; and the necessary materiel and educational needs required turning the aforementioned concepts and procedures into reality.

One of EUCAP NESTOR tasks is to provide strategic mentoring and advice to the Somaliland Public Offices involved in this process and the Coast Guard Leadership in order to translate the Vision into a realistic, balanced and affordable Force Structure in accordance with the Coast Guard Law, and provide assistance to determine the prioritised and sustainable 'Needs' and required individual and collective skillsets and competences. The latter is a vital condition to safely execute the daily tasks.

The Somaliland Vision for its Future Coast Guard has been defined as follows:

“Supported by international advice and assistance, and assisted by our dedicated ‘Champions for the Somaliland Coast Guard’ within our Ministries and Civil Society, we are set to embark on an arduous journey that will modernise and transform our current organisation into an agile, responsive Coast Guard, properly organised, commanded, equipped and trained to execute our tasks and responsibilities in a professional manner.”

It will not come as a surprise that a phased approach will be necessary, based on predetermined and agreed milestones. As mentioned earlier, the first phase is to achieve the qualification Limited 'Initial Operational Capability' not later than the end of 2016. The next phases, which will be determined by mid-2016, are to continue and further invest in capacities to effectively police and protect the Somaliland maritime domain. New concepts will need to be developed and tested that will guide the operational activities in the littoral, and an effective command and control organisation

will be implemented that is linked into the other Somaliland and regional law enforcement structures. Not in the least, the logistic organisation, which includes medical support for Coast Guard personnel, must be developed as a matter of urgency. It will require a combination of indigenous and foreign support until such time that the Somaliland Coast Guard becomes fully self-sustainable.

Maritime Education and Awareness Building

As discussed above, the potential of the Somaliland marine resources that are available for economic purposes is vast. To be able to fully exploit this potential, it will be imperative to build a core of 'maritime and marine professionals' that understand the intricacies of the "maritime domain"³ and how these can or will interact. Education and awareness building is an essential process to ensure that the marine resources can be exploited in a responsible manner and with a view to provide revenues for years to come.

Maritime environmental awareness is yet another strand of the broader environmental awareness that needs to be cultivated in Somaliland. I would argue that the broader environmental awareness starts within the families and communities, and radiates all the way out to sea. Clean seas, ports and beaches are not only an important indicator for foreign investors; it is also an insurance policy for future generations!

Improving the Gender Balance within the Somaliland Coast Guard organisation.

Having digested the previous paragraphs, it will no longer come as a surprise that Women have a role to play within the Coast Guard organisation. Over the past years, it has become clear that Women can make a difference in resolving conflict and building peace if they are allowed to participate and are fully involved. Women are not solely seen as victims of armed conflict anymore but also as decision makers and peace builders with a clear role to play in security sector institutions, including Coast Guards and Navies. Their full participation in decision-making, conflict prevention and resolution and all other peace initiatives is essential in order to serve the needs of the community as a whole and to the realization of lasting peace. As one instrument to achieve enduring maritime safety and security, the new Somaliland Coast Guard needs to integrate women in its organization and functioning. Women have to become integral part of the Coast Guard and should be enabled to take over tasks that non exhaustively include training, logistics, IT, as well as management and other senior positions. A full involvement of women cannot be achieved overnight, but the new vision for the Somaliland Coast Guard can bring the ultimate objective of gender equality one step closer.

In support to this process, EUCAP Nestor and NAGAAD have agreed to cooperate in defining the strategies required to start improving the gender balance..

³In simple terms, generally understood as "all that happens out at sea."

To sum up, this is just the starting point which hopefully will lead to more women actively engaged in peace and security in Somaliland also at senior levels. It is for that reason that EUCAP Nestor and NAGAAD will work together, and share our experiences with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to ensure a context sensitive approach towards improving the gender balance within the Coast Guard in line with UNSCR 1325 and other international frameworks. Step by step, but surely not wavering, will obstacles be put on the agenda, discussed, dealt with and overcome in a consensual manner. This article is but a first step, albeit it an important one. Readers reactions will shape the strategies, and will provide additional insights to ensure a balanced approach can be achieved. I am grateful to the Executive Director of the NAGAAD Network, Nafisa Yusuf Mohamed, for the opportunity to write this article as a 'kick-off' for further activity. I can only hope that those readers that had the courage to digest the full article will also show their courage in providing us the much needed feedback and advice! "

Thank you!