

**SUMMIT OF ECCAS, ECOWAS AND GGC HEADS OF
STATE AND GOVERNMENT ON MARTIME
SECURITY AND SAFETY IN THE GULF OF GUINEA
(Yaounde, 24-25 June 2013)**

CLOSING SPEECH BY THE HEAD OF STATE

Yaounde, 25 June 2013

- Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
- The Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General,
- The Vice-Chairperson of the African Union Commission,
- Special Envoys from governments of countries friendly to the Gulf of Guinea,
- Excellencies, Heads of Diplomatic Mission,
- Representatives of International Organizations,
- Distinguished Guests,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

As host of this Summit, it behoves me to take the floor once more as we conclude our deliberations. I am all the more comfortable with this privilege as it affords me the opportunity to hail the constructive spirit that has prevailed throughout the Yaounde Summit that is drawing to an end. I wish to wholeheartedly commend the different inputs that have helped to clarify our security outlook, thereby ushering in prospects for a greater control over the ocean.

Over the past few hours, a unified, dynamic and innovative Africa has provided concrete evidence of its resolve to make every effort to ensure maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea.

I welcome the spirit of dialogue and the atmosphere of trust that prevailed, as well as the foresightedness that guided our discussions. It could not have been otherwise considering the stake, namely making our ocean a safe and secure place for the movement of people and goods.

In fact, given the rigour and determination we have displayed in formulating the strategies to be adopted, I am fully convinced that our meeting has significantly advanced our efforts to combat piracy.

Given the vigour and resolve expressed by participants, I am confident that our safety and security concerns in our common maritime area have been adequately addressed.

- Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Maritime piracy, armed robbery, hostage-taking and illicit acts committed on the high seas, on our shores or mainland, pose a serious threat to our development as well as to peace and stability in the Gulf of Guinea.

It was therefore crucial to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 2039 of 29 February 2012, which recommends the holding of this Summit.

In this regard, I welcome the efforts of the neighbouring States of the Gulf of Guinea and the support provided by our international partners in safeguarding free and safe navigation in our ocean.

I also hail the adoption of a common regional strategy on maritime safety as well as its implementing instruments.

Of course, I am referring to the Declarations of Heads of State and Government of Central and West African States on safety and security in our common maritime area.

This is a decisive step towards fulfilling the expectations of our peoples who aspire to peace and prosperity.

I am also thinking of the Memorandum of Understanding among the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC). In many respects, a source of hope for maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea.

Finally, I am referring to the Code of Conduct on the prevention and suppression of acts of piracy, armed robbery against ships and illicit maritime activities in West and Central Africa.

To attain this objective, all stakeholders will be required to fully play their role in the effective implementation of the said instruments. This will be achieved by maintaining solid relations of trust between States and establishing effective mechanisms for operational coordination within the context of Resolution 2039.

This remarkable breakthrough achieved in Yaounde, will contribute to the regionalization of collective security on the Atlantic shore of our countries.

This is all the more necessary as acts of maritime piracy and armed robbery perpetrated in the Gulf of Guinea are gross violations of International Law.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We should commend ourselves for having made maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea an issue of grave concern for the international community, as

evidenced by the presence of many representatives of friendly countries and international organizations.

There is every reason to laud the progress this Summit will help us to achieve in our crusade against such infringements of international law. We must bear in mind that it is our future that is at stake and that our future also depends on the Gulf of Guinea as an ecosystem, a resource and a trade area.

This offers me an opportunity to gladly welcome the establishment of the Interregional Coordination Centre for the pooling of our resources. Our hope is for the said Centre to be capable of designing new concepts, innovative concepts so that we would no longer be taken unawares by the ingenuity of pirates or hostage takers.

In this regard, I would like to express my country's gratitude for its being chosen to host the Seat of the Centre.

I would also like to commend the African Union's Initiative to draw up an integrated African maritime strategy by 2050. It is proof that maritime safety and security issues occupy a prime place in the development of our continent.

Support from friendly countries and international organisations will also be essential to that end.

- Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
- Distinguished Guests,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

To conclude, I would like, once again, to express our sincere gratitude to the United Nations Organisation, African Union, ECOWAS, ECCAS, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, delegations and international partners that have graced this Yaounde Summit. I urge them to always stand by us especially as concerns the implementation of the decisions of this Summit.

Lastly, I avail myself of this opportunity to pay tribute to the “people of the sea”, this community, imbued with legendary courage, whose International Day is celebrated precisely on 25 June, which is coincidentally the day of closure of our Summit.

I now declare closed, the joint ECCAS-ECOWAS-GGC Summit on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea.

Thank you for your kind attention and I wish you a safe return to your respective countries.