



# 14th International Maritime Law Symposium

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## Draft Programme v.7

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All sessions will be held in the INTERPOL General Secretariat Main Conference Room

## **Maritime Terrorism and Piracy**

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### **Section I—Introduction**

The International Police Crime Organization, or INTERPOL, is an intergovernmental organization that helps with the policing and enforcing of laws across international borders. It was founded in 1923, and there are currently 196 members of the organization on all permanently inhabited continents, which are all connected to each other and the General Secretariat through a database called I-24/7. INTERPOL works with local police organizations to fight crime in multiple sectors.

Information is gathered, stored, and dispensed from 19 global databases which any member state may access. Interpol focuses on 3 main threats: organized crime, terrorism, cybercrime. INTERPOL also has a Strategic Framework for 2022-2025 with four strategic goals: trusted information for action, enriching policing through partnerships, advancing and innovating policing, and enhancing organizational performance and delivery. INTERPOL is overseen by the UN General Assembly, which controls the main decisions for the organization. The Executive Committee, another governing body within INTERPOL, oversees the implementation and execution of decisions passed by the General Assembly.

### **Section II—Background Information**

Modern Maritime Piracy is a global threat with several key areas, including the Western Indian ocean, Eastern Atlantic, and Southwest Pacific. Modern Maritime Piracy is a profitable business venture in the modern era, with investors, employees, contracts, and other staples of corporatization. These pirates often focus on high-value cargo such as oil and diesel which can be very quickly funneled into a variety of legitimate and semi-legitimate enterprises to launder the associated funds. More often, the physical cargo is secondary to the real source of income--the crew. These crew members are taken hostage and held for ransom. Research presented in the journal Marine Policy in 2018 suggested that in the previous 10 years, more than 6000 seafarers had been held hostage; among a representative sample of those victims, approximately 25% of them presented symptoms consistent with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and that as a result their health and wellness was significantly impacted.

The methods used by pirates can vary, but the use of weapons--from knives to military rifles--is prevalent. This issue has become such an epidemic that countries participating in the global marketplace have resorted to purchasing "pirate insurance" in case one of their vessels is intercepted by pirates. This additional expense raises the price of goods shipped through these hotspots of pirate activity, and countries eager to maximize their profits must decide between paying off pirates, thus imperiling future ventures, or working with authorities to stop the practice. Pirate attacks are underreported, as well, with the International Maritime Bureau estimating that in West Africa alone, only 1/3rd of pirate attacks are reported. Including other regions, that number only rises to approximately 42%.

The largest reason people resort to piracy is because they wish to provide for their family and more legal ventures are less lucrative or less available. Many of these regions are plagued by constant political issues, civil unrest, famine, and drought. With very little ways to produce a sufficient income in rural and urban environments, many turn to piracy. Piracy provides a better income than most jobs in the legal economy, and is also considered easier money as well. This is most common in coastal areas with high unemployment rates and significant government corruption. Other reasons for recruitment include insecurity as a result of political instability, territorial disputes, social status, and so on. Solutions addressing these needs would likely alleviate the pressure for populations to pursue extralegal means of revenue.

Nations are not just affected by the immediate act itself but also by its aftermath. Research suggests that a 10 vessel increase of seizures can lead to a decrease in the volume of exports by 11%. The impact of these pirate attacks, financially, adds up to somewhere between 7 and 12 billion dollars (USD) lost for the international economy. This is extremely alarming when this number is combined with the total number of attacks. In the first half of 2023, it was recorded that there were a total of 65 attacks. The effects of this can be felt worldwide through the flow of trade materials needed for manufacturing as well as consumer goods, thus incentivizing nations to curb or even eliminate this global threat.

## **Section III—UN Involvement**

The UN first started its response to marine piracy in the 1982 United Nations Convention On The Law Of The Seas (UNCLOS). This specific topic is addressed in Articles 100-107, as well as Article 110. Central to this convention is the notion that states must cooperate as much as possible to apprehend and prosecute criminals operating in shared international waters. Another important consideration is how governments should handle vessels involved with the trafficking of drugs. The UN has addressed some of the problems with piracy and advocates for nations to take stronger action. Piracy is also a concern for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, or UNODC. This branch of the UN has primarily been involved in helping local organizations cooperate together and share data, as well as coordinate actions to halt piracy.

INTERPOL itself has been involved in many different ways to counter this issue as well. INTERPOL has a Global Maritime Security Database, which allows nations to sort, classify and share data with each other on pirate activity. This has proved extremely useful to government agencies who utilize this information to apprehend pirates and neutralize terrorist threats. INTERPOL has also been assisting government agencies by providing them equipment and training necessary for the apprehension and prosecution of these criminals. There are a number of regional programs as well such as Project AGWA in western Africa and Project MAST in southeast Asia.

## **Section IV—Possible Solutions**

It is essential that criminals and pirates face appropriate consequences for their actions. In areas plagued by political corruption, this can be an incredible difficulty to overcome. While nations can increase patrol activity in their own territorial waters, the largest obstacle to overcome is the sheer vastness of international waters and the lack of jurisdiction for any one nation. Delegates must also consider that pirate vessels often operate extralegally, with only a thin veneer of legitimacy as to where they moor. As with the parallel malady of the maritime world, sea slavery and human trafficking, governments such as Thailand will claim that they are addressing the issue by way of tracking licenses; unfortunately, lackadaisical enforcement

and rampant corruption have created an entire industry of “ghost ships” who operate with cloned operating certificates and registration details. A secure database of ships’ registration with some consideration towards enforcement which does not infringe on a country’s sovereignty is in order. In addition, delegates will need to consider that pirates’ national citizenship may complicate prosecution for alleged crimes.

It is essential that the root cause of maritime piracy be examined--a lack of viable economic support. Poor workers living below the poverty level of their home country will be more drawn to an extralegal enterprise such as piracy no matter how criminalized it may become. Information campaigns and education sound very positive and encouraging until one considers that someone with a hungry family has more immediate needs to attend to than education.

## **Section V—Bloc Positions**

African: The African continent has been a continent plagued by piracy in the 21st century. Early in the 2000s and throughout most of the 2010s this was concentrated on the Horn of Africa, but in recent times it has shifted to the eastern coast. The main cause of this is due to the increased enforcement along trade routes in the east by organizations such as NATO. Most of these attacks target the crew for the purposes of hostage-taking and ransoming, but in the East there has been a significant shift towards cargo-oriented piracy. Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has become the main focus of investigation as this is where most of the attacks in the world are concentrated.

Asia-Pacific: Asian and Oceanian states have been actively attempting to counter piracy in their dominions, however, Asia still accounts for 60% of reported piracy in the world. The main area facing the threat of piracy is the southeast of Asia, specifically around the Strait of Malacca. This area faces many attacks yearly, with 41% of all pirate attacks between 1995 and 2013 being in this region. Most of the attacks in this region target the cargo onboard to resell on the black market. Along with the Strait of Malacca, Indonesia, Singapore, and the Philippines have had increases in maritime piracy and continue to be the most affected areas for piracy. Piracy in these regions is bolstered by weak governance and considerable corruption, as well as the geographically narrow straits that vessels pass through. Regardless, many of these countries have banded together to attempt to stop the piracy in these areas. Some measures that are being taken is increased awareness of identifying boats in their waters, and communicating about potential threats. Agencies such as ReCAAP (Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia) have aided in decreasing piracy in Asia and the Pacific as well.

Eastern European: Multiple Eastern European countries are members of the organization EUROPOL, which has launched actions by sending aid to areas facing the most threat such as the Horn of Africa. Incredibly troubling, though, are allegations of state-sponsored piracy such as that perpetrated by the Russian Federation on other vessels on the Black Sea. This area is also vulnerable to piracy due to its volume of commercial shipping as well as the geographically narrow waterways.

Latin American and Caribbean: Attacks in this region have steadily decreased, however attacks are still concerning for crew and businesses alike. These attacks have mainly concentrated along the western coast of Latin America along with significant activity in the Caribbean. Piracy works in tandem with other symbiotic maritime crimes such as drug trafficking and human trafficking.

Western European and Others: While the western coast of Europe is mostly free of brazen marine terrorism and piracy, they are impacted economically by global piracy. Most of Western Europe along with the U.S. and Canada are members of the NATO collective security organization who in 2009 launched operation “OCEAN SHIELD” to help counter piracy in the Northeast Indian Ocean. This effort was very successful against piracy in the region, with attacks dropping from the 20s and 30s in number of incidents to less than 5 in some years. Most of these nations are involved in financial and/or military aid to counter piracy so that goods will flow and maintain affordability for their customers.

## Section VI—Questions That Should Be Taken Into Consideration

How can policies be implemented in areas facing political turmoil?

What can individual states do to implement INTERPOL ideas and policies?

Which areas are in need of more immediate action, and which areas could become potential targets in the future?

How are these pirates operating and what can be done to block these actions?

Is there a reason people are turning to piracy and not other, legal, ways of making money?

## Section VI—Helpful Sites and Resources

Article—United Nations—Stronger action required to address changing dynamics of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea

[bit.ly/IIMUN2024-INTERPOL01](https://bit.ly/IIMUN2024-INTERPOL01) (Shortened URL from un.org)

Article—INTERPOL—Issues in Maritime Crime

[bit.ly/IIMUN2024-INTERPOL02](https://bit.ly/IIMUN2024-INTERPOL02) (Shortened URL from interpol.int)

Database—INTERPOL—Maritime crime [Use menu on left]

[bit.ly/IIMUN2024-INTERPOL03](https://bit.ly/IIMUN2024-INTERPOL03) (Shortened URL from interpol.int)

Article—UNODC—Maritime crime and Piracy

[bit.ly/IIMUN2024-INTERPOL04](https://bit.ly/IIMUN2024-INTERPOL04) (Shortened URL from unodc.org)

Report–Statista–Pirate attacks - Statistics & Facts

[bit.ly/IIMUN2024-INTERPOL05](https://bit.ly/IIMUN2024-INTERPOL05)

(Shortened URL from statista.com)

Document–United Nations–United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

[bit.ly/IIMUN2024-INTERPOL06](https://bit.ly/IIMUN2024-INTERPOL06)

(Shortened URL from un.org)

Article–United Nations–Piracy Under International Law

[bit.ly/IIMUN2024-INTERPOL07](https://bit.ly/IIMUN2024-INTERPOL07)

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**Potential Search Terms:** Maritime piracy, Maritime terrorism, Hostage taking at sea, Ransom Payments  
and Piracy, Sea Slavery