

# ECOWAS set to launch maritime zones against piracy

The 15-member Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is seeking to launch a pilot project aimed at monitoring and tackling piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

Salamatu Hussaini Suleiman, ECOWAS commissioner for political affairs, peace and security, said that over the past years, the ECOWAS region, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea, has seen piracy and various

other criminal acts.

"The heads of states and governments approved a strategy for combating that menace [i.e., maritime crime] and part of that strategy includes setting up maritime zones," she said.

The countries of the sub-region have been grouped into zones for information coordination and action, Suleiman explained. "The first one we are piloting in West Africa is the Zone E. This comprises Nigeria, Ni-

ger, Benin and Togo," added Suleiman.

She said Benin had offered to host the zone's coordinating centre. "This is part of what the meeting will discuss to see whether the venue provided is adequate," noted Suleiman.

She said the meeting would also discuss coordinating efforts for a maritime zone established by states of the ten-member Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) with a view to combating piracy. "There will be a regional coordinating centre and an inter-regional coordinating centre," added the ECOWAS official.

She said the inter-regional coordinating centre, based in Cameroonian capital Yaounde, would be launched on September 11 in line with decisions taken by ECOWAS and ECCAS heads of state at a joint summit in June of last year.

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