

CONTACT GROUP

ON PIRACY OFF THE COAST OF SOMALIA

The Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) was created on January 14, 2009 pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 1851. This voluntary ad hoc international forum brings together those stakeholders affected by Somali piracy: countries from the region, Western Europe, Middle East, Asia and the Americas, industry, seafarer's organisations and NGOs. The Contact Group coordinates political, military, and non-governmental efforts to tackle piracy off the coast of Somalia, ensure that pirates are brought to justice, and support regional states to develop sustainable maritime security capabilities.

Message From The Chairman

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“Thank you for making the CGPCS 20th Plenary a success!”



Dear friends and members of the CGPCS Community,

For this very special edition of our newsletter I want to first and foremost use this opportunity to thank each and every one of you, for making the recently completed 20th Plenary of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, a resounding success! Indeed without your inputs, your time, your valuable insights and hands on approach, the 20th Plenary would not have been as successful as it was. If we achieved in Mauritius it was again because of each of your efforts and contributions.

The 20th delivered notable agreements which are well captured in our agreed and released communiqué. If at this time you have not seen the communiqué then I invite you to visit www.lessonsfrompiracy.net to read in full what was agreed upon. I will, however, mention just a few of the resolutions which resonated positively within the plenary as follows:

1) To achieve the objective of zero seafarers and zero ships detained by pirates, key elements remain: (a) deterrence, monitoring and surveillance at sea, (b) compliance with the Best Management Practices, (c) armed guards on board merchant vessels when required following a risk assessment and legally deployed, (d) reporting networks to establish adequate Maritime Situational Awareness, (e) a legal finish to enable arrest and prosecution of suspected pirates, and (f) the disruption of onshore pirate networks and financiers;

- 2) That the Indian Ocean Commission will as of 1st January 2018, lead as chair of the CGPCS;
- 3) That future chairs should come from the region;
- 4) That a 21st Plenary be organized for 2018 which will be held at the United Nations in New York City;
- 5) That annual plenaries are retained, but the Chair is given the authority to call an extraordinary plenary should a situation arise which calls for the participants to meet outside the annual ordinary session;
- 6) That the role of the Chair is better defined making him/her more agile, communicative and responsive in order to meet the requirements of the CGPCS mandate (paragraph 51 of the Communiqué) and the term of office is increased to two years;
- 7) That a two-pronged Communications Strategy is adopted as per paragraph 42 of the Communiqué;
- 8) That the working group, now known as Working Group on Operations at Sea, be reinvigorated with the UAE as chair and India and Seychelles as co-chairs;
- 9) That the UN Trust Fund will play a more strategic and catalytic role in piracy prevention, contingent on the availability of new funding;
- 10) That the Contact Group stands ready to support the Federal Government and Federal Member States of Somalia to adhere to the commitment made at the London Somalia Conference of May 2017;

As Chairman my pledge to all within the community and for the time remaining during Seychelles' chairmanship of the CGPCS, is to engage as much as possible with key stakeholders so that we indeed achieve the results we all are aiming for. For this reason, and following the 20th Plenary, I undertook a 'goodwill' mission to Mogadishu to visit and meet with officials of the Federal Government of Somalia.

The mission took place between 23rd and 24th July 2017 and I thank the Federal Government of Somalia for their hospitality and for the support that was extended to me and my delegation. I as well extend my appreciation to UNSOM, IGAD and the Indian Ocean Commission for assisting and facilitating the CGPCS 'Goodwill Mission' to Mogadishu.

Again, noting the positives that we experienced at the 20th Plenary and the support expressed by all to continue on the worthy mission of the CGPCS, so that we soundly achieve objectives of the contact group, we are once again resolved to deliver for the region and beyond a lasting legacy.

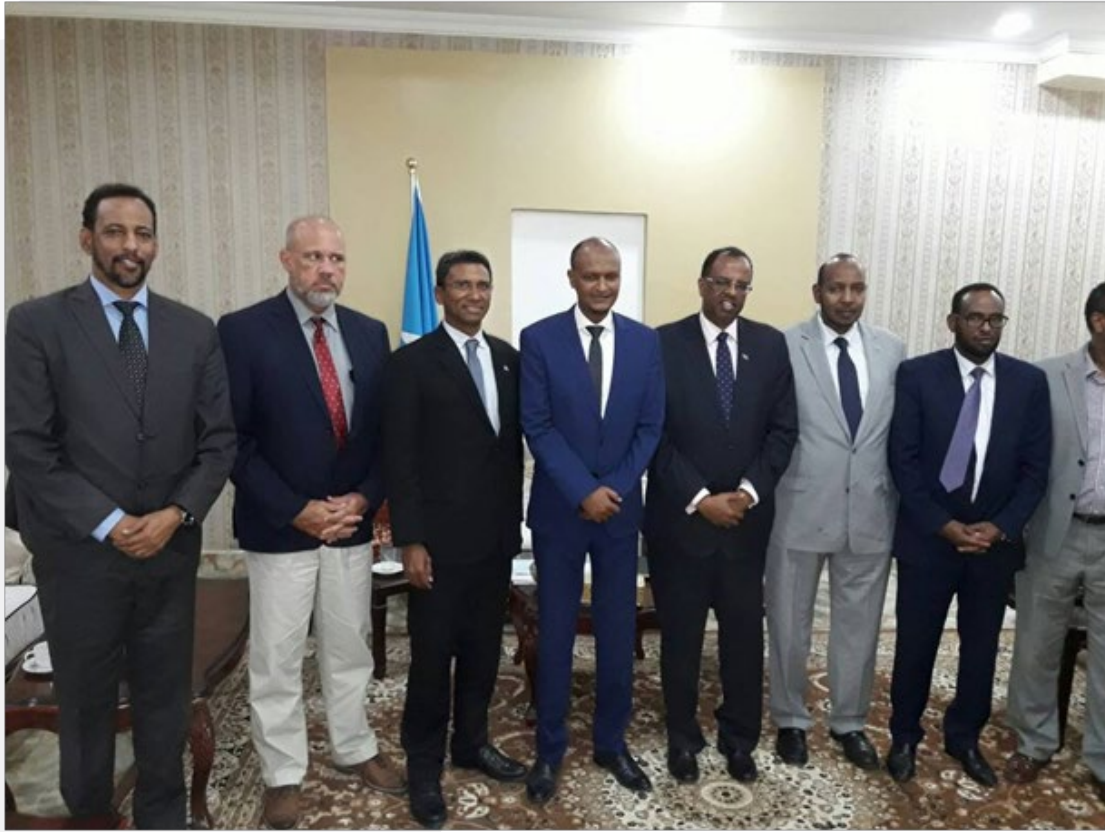
In closing, I once again extend my thanks to the Indian Ocean Commission, the Government of Mauritius and all members of the CGPCS who attended, for making this 20th Plenary, held in Mauritius at the Inter-Continental Hotel from the 5th – 7th July 2017, a resounding success!

Thank you!

Ambassador Barry Faure
Secretary of State
Chairman – CGPCS



CGPCS Chairman, Ambassador Barry Faure Mission of Goodwill to Mogadishu



CGPCS Chairman meets with Deputy Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia, His Excellency Mahdi Ahmed Guled, the Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources Abdirahman Mohamed Abdi Hashi, the State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abdulkadir Ahmedkheyr Abdi, and the Attorney General Ahmed Ali Dahir, at Villa Somalia, 23rd July 2017. Mr. Ahmed Hersi, Regional Coordinator on Maritime Security for ESA-IO Region from the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), and Mr. Raymond St. Ange, Head of CGPCS Secretariat are to the right of the Ambassador Faure

“In Somalia –High level discussions took place with the Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre, the Deputy Prime Minister Mahdi Ahmed Guled, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Yusuf Garaad Omar, the Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources Abdirahman Mohamed Abdi Hashi, the State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abdulkadir Ahmedkheyr Abdi, and the Attorney General Ahmed Ali Dahir. Discussions took place on regional and international efforts to promote maritime security cooperation and capacity building in Somalia and the larger region beyond Somalia; as well as the fight against piracy and IUU Fishing. There was interest from the Federal Government of Somalia to look for ways for the return of the Somali prisoners back home to Somalia to serve out their sentences, wherever they may be.”

Meeting with Foreign Affairs Minister of the FGS at Aden Abdulle International Airport - Mogadishu

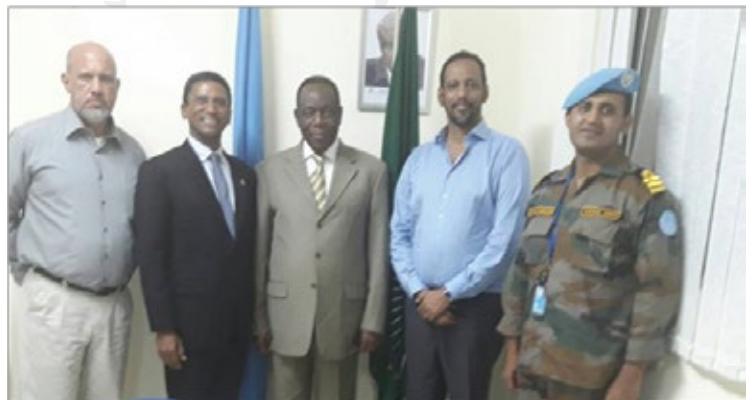


Upon arrival into Mogadishu aboard UNHAS flight from Nairobi, Kenya, the Chairman of the CGPCS, Ambassador Barry Faure, was greeted by the State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Abdulkadir Ahmedkheyr Abdi . A short bilateral meeting with the Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr. Yusuf Garaad Omar, assisted by the State Minister and the officials of the Seychelles delegation commenced.

Meeting with Special Representative of the African Union, Ambassador Francisco Caetano Jose Madeira

the Minister of Foreign Affairs Yusuf Garaad Omar and the State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abdulkadir Ahmedkheyr Abdi, meet Ambassador Faure upon arrival in Mogadishu

“The Chair, Ambassador Faure, as well called on the Special Representative to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (SRCC) for Somalia and Head of AMISOM, Ambassador Francisco Caetano Jose Madeira, the latter updated the mission on the current security situation in Somalia, noting that the FGS was a serious and responsible partner, which needs the support of the international community in the short, medium and long term; but, more importantly, NOW, if the gains of the past decade and the efforts of the new regime are to be sustained. “ – Source briefing report of CGPCS Chairman



Chairman Faure meets with Ambassador Francisco Caetano Jose Madiera. Mr. Ahmed Hersi of IGAD and Commander Rajeev Singh of the Indian Navy and now assigned to UNSOM

Opinion - Steady As She Goes – As CGPCS Enters 2017. By Raymond St Ange (Seychelles Nation Newspaper, January 12th 2017)

In a recent interview with SBC television I mentioned that although there had been no successful attacks against IMO registered vessels by Somali pirates in the year 2016, and that the last of the hostages, crew from the FV Naham 3 were successfully released in October 2016 after long negotiations by the Hostage Support Programme, the objectives of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) had been partially met. With this statement some may think that this is mission accomplished. In part it is.

It is certain that in some quarters momentum to wrap up the work of the group, sooner rather than later, is being promoted. It is equally correct to say that for others within the community, it is rather an opportunity to ensure that what has been achieved to date is not lost and that the good name of the CGPCS is somehow preserved as the region goes into 'post Somali piracy mode', and continued rebuilding efforts.

In the meantime our work at the secretariat continues supporting all members, the various working groups and of course the chairmanship, with Seychelles again successfully in the seat for 2017.

One interesting area of work which the secretariat has gladly taken up is to support the idea that was started early in 2016, that being the Sir James Mancham Centre for Peace Studies and Diplomacy, under the University of Seychelles. Without going into too great detail and considering the loss suffered by the Seychellois nation just a few days ago on January 8, 2017 with the passing of former President James Mancham, makes this work by the CGPCS secretariat even more important.

Piracy threats in the Western Indian Ocean remain, even as Somalia as a country with the support of the international community tries to stabilise itself. The Somali parliament having sworn in on December 27, 2016 is scheduled to elect a new president on January 24, 2017.

Priorities for sure are many and with emerging security threats globally and within the region, understanding that resources are stretched, it would be sound strategy to ensure that an approach made under the CGPCS umbrella, with lessons learnt and partnerships made and strengthened, could be maintained in one form or another.

A 'steady as she goes' approach therefore for the CGPCS community in 2017 should be the preferred avenue of response even as other initiatives are considered and as the Federal Republic of Somalia takes the needed sound steps to stabilise itself so that peace, progress and prosperity can be given an opportunity to grow and flourish.

PIRACY IN THE GULF OF OMAN A MISUNDERSTANDING?

RECENT REPORTS of the return of pirates in the waters of the Gulf of Oman may be somewhat premature. (Source www.oceanuslive.org)

According to the International Maritime Bureau Piracy Reporting Centre report, an incident involving the Greece-flagged bulk carrier Navios Hios on 7 May 2017, which reported an approach by suspected pirates in a skiff off the Iranian coast - around 12 nautical miles southwest of Bandar E Jask - was said to be “a mere misunderstanding”.

IMB quoted the Iranian Maritime Safety and Marine Protection Directorate claiming that the “alleged piracy situation” between the Navios Hios and an Iranian fishing vessel off the coast of Chabahar, Iran, was resolved.

The Iranian fishing vessel had reportedly laid fishing nets in the area and had made an approach toward the ship in order to request she diver her route so as to prevent her from destroying the nets as she made transit through them. The Directorate goes on to say that the ship had misunderstood the approach as a piracy attempt and had subsequently contacted the relevant authorities following the raising of the alarm.

An Iranian naval patrol vessel was immediately deployed to the scene and admonished the fishing vessel for having laid fishing nets in the international shipping route. The fishing vessel was warned of the penalties and potential legal consequences should they repeat their actions in the future.

In reiterating the point, the Directorate expressed their assurance that the situation was “a mere misunderstanding”. It should be noted that the original report by the Navios Hios stated three suspicious skiffs were sighted with a suspected mother ship seen astern at a distance of 2 nautical miles. The report went on to state that the persons in the skiff were holding ladders. The bulk carrier carried out anti-piracy measures, including increasing speed, evasive manoeuvres and contacted port authorities. As the course alterations were conducted, the skiffs and suspected mother ship followed. The Iranian Navy contacted the bulk carrier some 20 minutes later informing the Master to alter course, which then saw the skiffs aborting the approach and moving away.

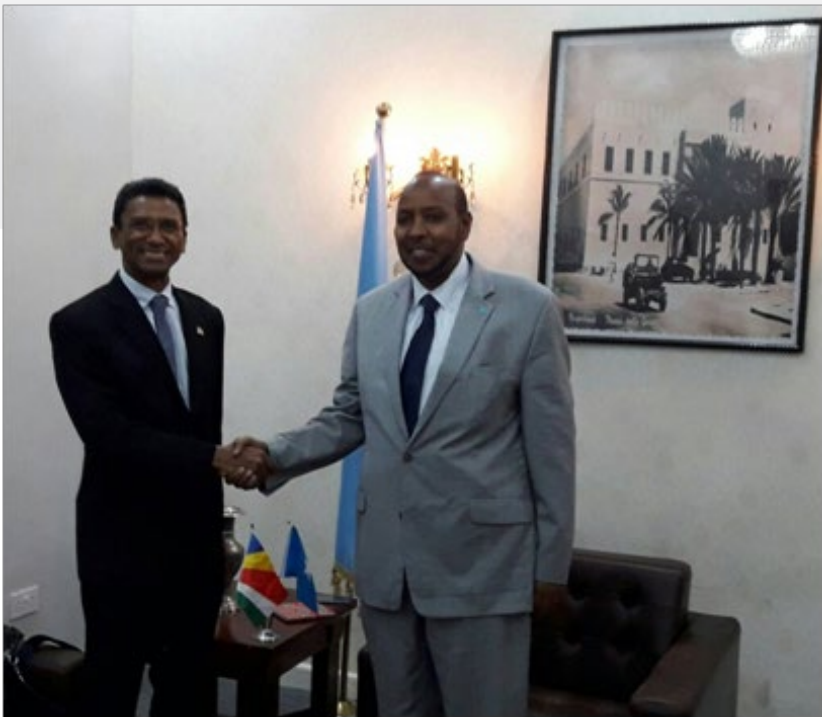
On 11 July, authorities issued a report stating that a container ship had been approached at speed by a skiff with two occupants in the vicinity of two previous incidents reported in May 2017. The ship sounded its piracy alarm system but the skiff continued the approach. The embarked armed security team fired three warning shots as the skiff came to within 1 cable (approx 600 feet) distance, after having sighted weapons held by the skiff occupants. The vessel and crew were reported to be safe.

Whilst the first quarter of 2017 has seen an increase in supposed piracy activity, the incidents have remained in the vicinity of the Somali coastline out to the Gulf of Aden IRTC and the Socotra Gap. A slew of suspicious incidents have occurred in the Red Sea, however, it cannot be categorically classed as involving suspected Somali pirates. The conflict in Yemen continues to spill into the coastal waters. This may also relate to routes used for smuggling of weapons and

Confirmed reports of Somali piracy occurring near the Iranian coast are thin on the ground. Six approaches and three suspicious activity incidents have been reported in the vicinity since May 2013. Since the commencement of naval patrols to deter Somali pirates began in 2008, the Iranian Navy has been on the outside of the naval forces acting in a loose coalition, therefore, the reach out by the Iranian Maritime Safety and Marine Protection Directorate is an unusual step. The so-called surge in piracy has not transpired to the level of even 3 years ago and now that the monsoon period has returned, it is unlikely any attempt of note will occur in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean for the time being. However, it is reiterated that vigilance remains the watchword when transiting these areas.

CGPCS CHAIRMAN FAURE ON GOODWILL MISSION TO MOGADISHU

THE Seychelles' chair of the Contact Group on Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS), Ambassador Barry Faure, has undertaken a goodwill mission to Mogadishu, capital of Somalia and the seat of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS).



Ambassador Faure, who occupies the seat on behalf of the Republic of Seychelles, said upon his return from the July 23-24 mission that he was very satisfied with the outcome and the warm hospitality of the FGS which welcomed the visit and helped to plan it since the 20th CGPCS Plenary earlier this month in Mauritius.

“It was an opportunity for the CGPCS to reiterate its solidarity towards, and confidence in, the newly elected FGS, as well to take note of the noticeable progress that is already taking place in Mogadishu,” Ambassador Faure said.

High-level discussions took place with the Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre, the deputy Prime Minister Mahdi Ahmed Guled, the Minister for Foreign Affairs Yusuf Garaad Omar, the Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources Abdirahman Mohamed Abdi Hashi, the State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abdulkadir Ahmedkheyr Abdi, and the Attorney General Ahmed Ali Dahir.

Discussions took place on regional and international efforts to promote maritime security cooperation and capacity building in Somalia and the larger region beyond Somalia, as well as the fight against piracy and IUU fishing. Following the discussions and in the interest of promoting regional and bilateral cooperation, senior Somali officials are expected to reciprocate the visit in the near future.

The mission also met and interacted with various key international stakeholders assisting Somalia in its recovery, including the UN, the FAO, the EU and the AU.

During a call on the special representative to the chairperson of the African Union Commission (SRCC) for Somalia and Head of AMISOM, Ambassador Francisco Caetano Jose Madeira, the latter updated the mission on the current security situation in Somalia, noting that the FGS was a serious and responsible partner which needs the support of the international community in the short, medium and long term; but, more importantly, NOW, if the gains of the past decade and the efforts of the new regime are to be sustained.

The mission also comprised special advisor to the Designated Minister, Raymond St Ange (Head of the Secretariat of the CGPCS), Ahmed Hersi, the Regional Coordinator on Maritime Security for ESA-IO Region from the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), Commander Rajeev Kumar Singh and Fartum Mohamed Ibrahim, Maritime Security Advisor and Maritime Officer, respectively from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). UNSOM, IGAD and the Indian Ocean Commission played a much appreciated role in facilitating and coordinating the visit of the mission to Mogadishu.

FROM PIRACY TO MARITIME SAFETY! – CONTRIBUTED BY IOC



French navy frigate protecting a vulnerable ship (piracy threat)

The Indian Ocean is one of the main arteries of world maritime traffic. The increase of piracy in the mid-2000s has greatly disrupted activities in this area.

The impacts of piracy have been as important for the shipping lines that transit through the area as for the countries in this region, where part of the economy depends on the sea. Today, even if the phenomenon is contained, the causes of piracy remain.

The Somali piracy crisis has led to bring awareness on other threats such as human and drugs trafficking, illegal fishing, smuggling of weapons or charcoal which are not new phenomenon in the Indian Ocean. At the same time, it has also revealed the region's dependence on external security providers like EU, NATO, CMF operations or the deployments of independent nations, which have greatly contributed to the enhancement of maritime security in the area.

Today, the challenges are the simultaneous consolidation of the individual capacities of the States of the region and the strengthening of their collective cooperation. Only this collective action is capable of containing in the long run the threat of piracy. In addition, only a regional response including the available means and human resources with some support, can expect to meet all the maritime safety and security challenges in the Indian Ocean.

The EU-funded Maritime Security Program MASE is precisely addressing this issue, with its objectives and its innovative implementation approach based on the full involvement of four regional organizations, the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), the East African Community (EAC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC). From the exchange of maritime information to the conduct of offshore maritime operations and judicial processing, these actions form part of the same collective chain bringing together actors from different administrations and from different States, all of which are involved in the same area and affected by the same threats. With this regional approach, the MASE program is one of the main drivers of regional ownership in the fight against maritime threats as a whole.

Gradually, the regional and international community has extended its field of reflection and intervention, from tackling the sole issue of maritime piracy to fight maritime security and safety issues as a whole. Effective and sustainable commitment of the States, mainly through the regional organizations, is a prerequisite for the Indian Ocean becoming a zone of peace, as the General Assembly of the United Nations stated in its 16th December 1971 Declaration.

TWO MARITIME SECURITY CENTRES COMMISSIONED – SEYCHELLES NATION

Two centres to enhance maritime security have been commissioned. THE NATIONAL Information Sharing and Coordination Centre (NISCC) and the Regional Centre for Operations Coordination (RCOC) were officially opened last weekend at Bois de Rose [Seychelles] by Vice-President Vincent Meriton, the Minister for Home Affairs Mitcy Larue, the French Ambassador Lionel Majesté-Larrouy and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade of Mauritius Vishnu Luchmeenairadoo.



The NISCC, being a national entity, will have its mission to co-ordinate and manage the ever increasing level of activities within the maritime sector, such as to provide sufficient maritime security necessary for sustainable development of the Blue economy sector, while operating the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (JRCC), coordinating oil spills and responses to coastal maritime crime, as well as operating the Coastal Radio Station.

The NISCC will act as a first point of contact and as the centre of maritime security operations for key national stakeholders.

The RCOC follows an urgent call made in Djibouti on May 15, 2016 by the Community of the Eastern Southern Africa and Indian Ocean (ESA-IO) for Seychelles to host a regional centre for operational coordination alongside the Regional Maritime Information Infusion Centre (RMIFC) in Madagascar.

As agreed by the IOC Council of Ministers, the RCOC will operate under the Regional Programme to Promote Maritime Security (MASE) (37.5 million Euros) and will be responsible to organize operational response at sea jointly with the Regional States of the ESA-IO with the goal of preventing actions or situations affecting maritime security in the ESA-IO region in line with the provisions of the international law.

The setting up of both establishments is a commitment made by President Danny Faure to tackle all forms of illicit activities at sea within the region, namely drugs as well as anti-piracy efforts, noting that instability in Somalia still persists. Minister Larue said the opening of the two centres is an historic moment for Seychelles and a milestone to improve maritime security responses.

“These two centres will enable Seychelles to be better prepared and to remain engaged as we step up our maritime domain awareness within our waters and the Seychelles Exclusive Economic Zone, and far into the region and beyond. In May this year, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the setting up of the NISCC, a project conceived two years ago by dedicated men, women and officers, all patriotic Seychellois,” she said.

She added that the NISCC will be the right arm of the RCOC, and will be the prime point of contact for regional and international organisations when responding to, or support of, security or defense related missions in Seychelles’ jurisdiction and beyond.

“It will as well serve and coordinate with all key national stakeholders such as the police, coastguards, SCAA, ports authority, NDEA, DRDM and SFA, where each agency will be represented at this centre, and when those agencies have to respond that their responses are more efficient and timely,” she added.

She also took time to thank SCAA which has been a core member of the committee to set up the NISCC.

The director of REFLECS 3 Joseph Bibi also pointed out that both centres are key structures to protect maritime security. “Today we welcome the arrival of not one but two centres, which will be positioned and operating from the REFLECS 3. The NISCC and the RCOC are both integral to maritime domain awareness and will certainly complement each other as they work to ensure the security posture both nationally and regionally is not compromised but improved,” he said. During the ceremony there was a signing of the RCOC host agreement by Minister Larue and Minister Luchmeenairadoo.

At the end of the ceremony all the invitees were guided on a tour of both centres.