

The Legal and Socio-Economic Implications of Maritime Crimes in Nigeria: Challenges and the Way Forward

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Abstract

Maritime crimes constitute a significant threat to Nigeria's national security, economic stability, and regional maritime governance. These crimes include piracy, armed robbery at sea, illegal oil bunkering, human trafficking, drug trafficking, illegal fishing, and environmental pollution. Despite various legal and institutional frameworks established to combat these offences, enforcement remains weak due to systemic corruption, inadequate maritime surveillance, jurisdictional challenges, and limited inter-agency coordination. This work examines the legal and socio-economic implications of maritime crimes in Nigeria, evaluates existing enforcement mechanisms, and proposes reforms aimed at strengthening maritime security and promoting sustainable blue economy development.

Keywords: Maritime Crimes; Maritime Piracy; Armed Robbery at Sea; SPOMO Act 2019; Illegal Unreported and Unregulated Fishing; NIMASA; Nigerian Navy; UNCLOS; SUA Convention; Gulf of Guinea.

1. Introduction

Nigerian waters are among the most dangerous in the world because maritime criminals perceive the country's waterways to be conducive to their operations. As a result, incidents of maritime crime in Nigerian seas have recently attracted attention. Nigeria's economy, security, and trade are all seriously threatened by maritime crimes, especially in the Gulf of Guinea. These crimes, which are frequently motivated by issues like poverty, unemployment, and environmental degradation, include piracy, armed robbery, kidnapping, oil bunkering, and pipeline damage.² Nigeria's maritime domain, particularly the Gulf of Guinea, is one of the most strategically important and economically valuable maritime corridors in the world. The region facilitates international trade, oil exports, and fishing activities. However, it has also become a hotspot for maritime crimes, especially piracy and oil theft.³ According to the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), the Gulf of Guinea accounts for a significant proportion of global piracy incidents, with Nigeria being

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² L. Otto, 'Maritime Crime in Nigeria and Waters Beyond: Analysing the Period 2009 to 2013,' <https://www.researchgate.net> accessed 12 June 2026.

³ E. T. Aniche and E. O. Ugwu, 'Nigeria and Extra-Continental Presence in the Gulf of Guinea: Implications for Security and Development,' <https://www.researchgate.net> accessed 10 July 2026.

central operational hub (IMB, 2023). These crimes undermine economic development, threaten human security, and weaken investor confidence in Nigeria's maritime sector.⁴

2. Maritime Piracy

Maritime Piracy as a general term constitutes a particular form of maritime violence usually characterised by aggression, plunder, hostage-taking and death. Pirate attacks threaten seafarers, the security of navigation and the marine environment, and also has the potential to disrupt the provision of humanitarian aid, fishing tourism and marine scientific research. The alteration of navigational routes in order to bypass areas of suspected pirate activity also affect commerce.⁵

Piracy has existed in human history as far back as people navigate oceans as a means of trade and has been a threat to all maritime states. The term piracy has its origin in the classical world and Roman and Greek literature refer to it as *pierato* and *pirata* respectively.⁶ In the Western Roman Empire, communities were sustained through acts of raiding ships and these activities were not considered criminal by the Romans. This is because *pirata* were seen as strong to confront the enemies of the Roman Empire. However, after the fall of Western Roman Empire, *pirata* were abandoned and were no longer used. But this is not to suggest that piratical activities stopped; it continued as series of attacks persisted.⁷ In Nigeria, piracy has traditionally been of a subsistence character because pirates were relatively small shore-based groups preying on ships off Lagos and the southwest of Nigeria. Subsistence piracy and fisheries disputes are common occurrences along the Bakassi, Cross River and Akwa Ibom coasts where attacks intensified, largely as a result of the unresolved Bakassi Peninsula issue and corrupt Nigerian licensing practices for fishing vessels.

Piracy is a technical term which refers to particular acts of violence committed on the high seas or in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Article 101 of the UNCLOS III 1982 and Article 15 of the Convention on the High Sea 1958 contain the internationally recognized scheme of definitions and authorizations in relation to piracy, codifies the authorities necessary to repress this crime and includes an obligation for all states to cooperate in this activity.⁸ The maritime crime of piracy also exists independently in customary international law, meaning that it applies to and empowers all states regardless of whether they have ratified UNCLOS.⁹ However, from the definition of the above provisions, piracy cannot occur within waters subject to the full sovereignty of a state and territorial sea. Also, for an act to constitute piracy, it must be for private ends.¹⁰ The importance of private ends is that it differentiates piracy with acts of terrorism because act of terrorism is not ordinarily conducted for private ends. Furthermore, for an act to constitute piracy, it must involve two ships. Hence, where the crew, passengers or stowaways are already onboard and seize a ship, it is not regarded as an act of piracy.

⁴ International Maritime Bureau (IMB), (2023). *Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships Report*. London: ICC Commercial Crime Services.

⁵ M. Patricia, 'The Fight Against Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships Off the Coast of Somalia: International Cooperation Illustrated', in G. N. A. Martinez, ed.; *Serving the Rule of International Maritime Law: Essays in Honour of Professor David Attard*, Routledge, (New York: Routledge Publishing 2010) 216.

⁶ A. O. Abdulrazaq, 'Maritime Pirates: The Criminal Underworld of the Nigerian Maritime Domain,' (2015) (6)(2) *The Gravitas Review of Business and Property Law* 74.

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ Convention on the High Sea 1958, Art15.

⁹ United Nations Maritime Crime Manual, 2nd Edn.

¹⁰ UNCLOS III 1982, Art101.

It has been argued that both definitions offered by 1982 UNCLOS and the 1958 Convention are too narrow for the challenges posed by modern day piracy. The inadequacy of the Conventions to cover many violent crimes committed on the seas became manifest in 1985 with the Achille Lauro incident. On 7th October, 1985, four (4) armed stowaways onboard the Italian cruise liner, Achille Lauro, hijacked the ship and killed a passenger on wheelchair, an American Jew. The attack, apparently for political motivations, took place while the ship was in Egyptian waters. The motivation and fact that the attackers were on the ship placed the attack outside the realm of the definition of piracy under the 1982 UNCLOS. The international community with various interests in prosecuting the perpetrators was left without the authority under international law to prosecute them.¹¹ A careful perusal of its Articles 100 to 107 of UNCLOS III 1982, however reveals that the formula for the seas is configured to address maritime insecurity in the high seas, not within territorial waters. In turn, the challenge of maritime piracy within the territorial waters is directed at each of the littoral states. A counter opinion however is that pirates have no regard for the ships of any country.¹² This disposition attracted opprobrium from several quarters globally to the states within the domain, and compelled the major powers to decide on the best approaches to assisting the GoG states to tackle the menace of the sea-lords.

After the Achille Lauro incident, the international community, through the United Nations and the International Maritime Organisation formulated the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (SUA) in March 1988 to establish a legal basis for prosecuting maritime violence that did not come under the 1982 UNCLOS piracy regime. The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and International Maritime Bureau (IMB) also offered a separate definition for armed robbery against ships as ‘any unlawful act of violence or detention, or any act of depredation, or threat thereof, other than act of ‘piracy,’ directed against a ship or against persons or property onboard such a ship, within a State’s jurisdiction over such offences.’¹³ The above definition envisages unlawful act against a ship during passage and in port or anchor regardless of whether the ship is inside the territorial waters when the attack occurred.

The drivers of piracy within the GoG are land-based. These include political corruption, poor government, and under-resourced and poorly motivated law enforcement.¹⁴ Of essence, the state is expected to provide its citizens with security from fear and want. This informed the social contract. According to an author, the state of nature is a state of constant war, wherein humans live in perpetual fear of one another. Peace is attained only by coming together to forge a social contract, whereby men consent to be ruled in a commonwealth governed by one supreme authority.¹⁵ Across the GoG however, the essence of statehood is, in part, lacking. The situation is quite grim in Nigeria where non-state actors freely unleash terror on the citizens. States are expected to find a clearer sense of both purpose and form, a distinctive idea of some sort which lies at the heart of the state’s political identity.¹⁶ Whereas the state is expected to operate a social

¹¹J. D. Simon, ‘The Implications of the Achille Lauro Hijacking for the Maritime Community,’ <https://www.rand.org> accessed 13 June 2026.

¹² O. P. Adesanya, ‘The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Extra-African Interests and Africa’s Development,’ (2012) (4) *Journal of Arts and Contemporary Studies* 55–21.

¹³ International Maritime Bureau, ‘Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships-Annual Report for the Period 1 January-December’ (January 2009) 4.

¹⁴ E. Lopez-Lucia, ‘Fragility, Conflict and Violence in the Gulf of Guinea,’ (2015) *Rapid Literature Review*.

¹⁵ T. Hobbs, ‘Fear as the Determining Factor in Human Life,’ <https://www.sparks.com> accessed 3 January 2025

¹⁶ B. Buzan, ‘People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-cold War Era,’ (1983) *University of North Carolina Press*.

contract tailored towards sustaining the citizens who constitute it, the opposite is the reality within the GoG. The states therein function differently from the citizens' expectations; and have their own interests, which mostly are the interests of the dominant elites that use the state to advance their interests.¹⁷ Most of the piratical activities within the region were the fallout of the above scenario. In Nigeria for instance, the initial intention of some of the militants was to salvage their communities from outright destruction and growing poverty. When weaned off militancy in 2009, the militants had the cost of high standard of living and the extent of poverty which their families might sink into to contend with. In turn, they had to choose between sustaining or reneging their "proselytised" persona. Their choice to sustain the status influenced their doing about-face-turn on the ships sailing at the rear flanks of Nigeria, and later across the GoG, hence establishing a new normal of voyaging within the domain. Notable however is that those engaged in the bad order at sea are not strictly the former militants from Nigeria nor are they Nigerians alone; rather some other nationals of the region are deeply involved too. For instance, on 18 January 2014, a 75,000-ton tanker, MT Kerala, vanished off the coast of Angola. The pirates conducted their activities for more than a week without fear of being caught. After offloading 12,270 tons of Kerala's diesel cargo to other ships, the hijackers released the tanker about 1,300 miles away from the coast of Nigeria.¹⁸ The region has become a pirate sanctuary, making it nearly impossible for merchant ships to sail through without paying additional shipping fees. As a result, the cost of shipping has increased. This burden would, of course, be borne by the eventual customer and shared with the shipping goods. However, the domain's broader society would bear the costs of its effects, which would include hyper-galloping inflation and unemployment. This nefarious activity would further reduce the proceed that the states are to earn from the berthing of ships in their ports; while it could reduce the number of strategic resources that get to the international markets in Europe and North America through the GoG.

Piracy exists as a universal crime upon which all states are entitled to take action. It is one of the crimes where the application of universal jurisdiction is recognized under customary international law because pirates are considered *hostis humani generis*, that is, enemies of all humanity.

3. Armed Robbery at Sea

Armed robbery against ships at Sea means any of the following acts:

- a. Any illegal act of violence or detention or any act of depredation, or threat thereof, other than an act of 'piracy,' committed for private ends and directed against a ship or against persons or property on board such a ship, within a State's internal waters, archipelagic waters and territorial sea; and
- b. Any act of inciting or of intentionally facilitating an act described above.¹⁹

The legal definition of piracy must be distinguished from the concept of armed robbery against ships. Armed robbery against ships is a term used by the IMO in its Code of Practice for the Investigation of Crimes of Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships.²⁰ This Code, which has no legal status, defines armed robbery against ships as 'any illegal act of violence or detention or any act of depredation, or threat thereof, other than an act of piracy, committed for private ends and

¹⁷ F. Block, 'Marxist Theories of the State in World Systems Analysis', in B. H. Kaplan eds, *Social Change in the Capitalist World Economy*, (London, Sage Press 1978) 27 - 37.

¹⁸ J. Bridger, 'Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea: Oil-soaked Pirates,' <https://news.usni.org> accessed 3 January 2024.

¹⁹ UNCLOS III 1982.

²⁰ United Nations – IMO Assembly Resolution A.1025 (26), adopted 2 December 2009.

directed against a ship or against persons or property on board such a ship, within a State's internal waters, archipelagic waters and territorial sea; and any act of inciting or of intentionally facilitating an act described above.²¹ Going by the International Chamber of Commerce-International Maritime Bureau's ICC-IMB description, the location at sea determines the use of either piracy or sea armed robbery as the nomenclature for the theft of any item from a vessel, including equipment, the crew's personal effects, cargo, etc., by armed pirates within the territorial waters of a country. The vastness of the GoG and the very low naval capacity of the states therein have contributed immensely to the growth of armed robbery at sea and intensified the menace it poses to voyagers traversing the Gulf. Consequently, the region suffers a disturbing description of the epicentre of armed robbery against ships, supposedly setting those traversing the zone on alert or attracting attention to the irresponsibility of the countries within the domain.²² Thus, this crime has posed a severe impediment to the huge contributions that the blue economy of the region should have made to the development of each of the states within the region. In the first half of 2020 for instance, pirates and armed robbers operated off at least eight countries in the Gulf of Guinea (Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, and Gabon) targeting a variety of vessels which included tankers, container ships, general cargo vessels, fishing vessels, passenger vessels, and numerous vessels supporting oil drilling/production.²³ IMB further reports that violence against crews remains on the rise, and the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) cautioned ships to remain on guard at all times and increase their safety.²⁴ Evidently, the fluctuation of piracy and armed robbery against ships attacks in Nigeria and the GoG might be influenced by a variety of factors ranging from corruption to poverty which are the root causes of piracy and still poses a major threat at the global level.

4. Kidnapping and Hostage

Kidnapping for ransom is the action of taking a person hostage for the purpose of achieving the payment of a ransom. The definition of hostage-taking can be found in Article 1 of the 1979 International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages as Any person who seizes or detains and threatens to kill, to injure or to continue to detain another person (hereinafter referred to as the 'hostage') in order to compel a third party, namely, a state, an international intergovernmental organization, a natural or juridical person, or a group of persons, to do or abstain from doing any act and an explicit or implicit condition for the release of the hostage commits the offence of taking of hostages ('hostage-taking') within the meaning of this Convention.²⁵

Kidnapping at sea is mostly an extension of maritime piracy and/or armed robbery. It is the illegal forceful seizure of human beings for pecuniary purpose. The link between maritime piracy and kidnapping is the platform that piracy presents for the forceful taking of seafarers of a vessel as hostages for the purpose of extorting certain ransom on them. For instance, a \$300,000 was paid to some pirate kidnappers before the Nigerian Army could get the release of 14 crew members,

²¹ IMO Code of Practice for the Investigation of Crimes of Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships

²² ICC-IMB, 'Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships: Report for the Period 1 January – 31 March 2022,' <https://www.icc-ccs.org> accessed 23 June 2026.

²³ United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) – Maritime Administration, 'Report on Gulf of Guinea Piracy/Armed Robbery/Kidnapping for Ransom – 2020,' <https://www.maritime.dot.gov> accessed 3 January 2025.

²⁴ ICC-IMB, 'Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships: 2021 Report,' <https://www.icc-ccs.org> accessed 3 January 2026.

²⁵ International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages 1979, Art1.

which comprised of six Chinese, three Indonesians, one Gabonese, and four Nigerians.²⁶ Kidnapping involves taking such hostages to land or transferring them to another vessel till what is demanded as ransom – money or an action – is paid or done. An instance of this was the kidnap of 15 crew members from a chemical tanker Davide B at 210 nautical miles (389 kilometres) south of Cotonou in the GoG.²⁷ Kidnapping peaked in 2020 with 135 crew kidnapped from their vessels globally; but the GoG accounted for over 95%, which is 130 of the crew numbers that were kidnapped.²⁸ In another instance, pirates kidnapped several crew members of Iris S, a Ghanaian fishing vessel within the 100 nautical miles south of Cotonou, Benin Republic on 26 May 2021. Interestingly, the same vessel had earlier been attacked on 19 May 2021 at 65 miles south of Tema within the region.²⁹ The accounts above reveal that kidnapping is not peculiar to a locale of the region. It cuts across the domain. In Nigeria, kidnapping could be for simple purpose, political reason or for ransom. Also, kidnapping could be for ritual, terrorism or organ trafficking. Kidnapping has adverse effects on various sectors of the Nigerian economy. The tourism industry suffers as potential tourists perceive the country as unsafe, leading to decreased visitor arrivals and revenue losses. Agricultural activities may also be disrupted, affecting food production and supply chains. Moreover, infrastructure projects and investments in sectors such as oil and gas can be delayed or scaled back due to security concerns³⁰. Kidnapping incidents negatively impact Nigeria's attractiveness to foreign investors. The perception of insecurity and the risks associated with operating in an environment with prevalent kidnapping incidents discourage foreign direct investment. This reduction in FDI limits capital inflows, technology transfer, and job creation, hindering economic development and diversification.³¹ Kidnapping incidents have a direct impact on the tourism and hospitality sector. Potential tourists, including both domestic and international visitors, may choose alternative destinations due to safety concerns. This results in a decline in revenue for hotels, tour operators, restaurants, and other related businesses, leading to job losses.³² The Nigerian government has taken various measures to combat kidnapping and mitigate its impact. Law enforcement agencies have established specialized anti-kidnapping units, equipped with training and resources to handle kidnapping cases effectively.³³ Anti-Kidnapping Legislations in Nigeria like Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), Criminal Code, Penal Code, Terrorism Prevention Act, Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, Anti-Kidnapping Legislations by States in Nigeria, Anti-Kidnapping Legislations in Other Jurisdictions have been enacted to criminalize kidnapping offences and provide stiffer penalties for offenders.

²⁶ J. Campbell, 'From Africa in Transition, Africa Program, and Nigeria on the Brink,' <https://www.cfr.org> accessed 3 January, 2026.

²⁷ Agency France Presse, 'Pirates Kidnap 15 Sailors in Gulf of Guinea off Benin: Company,' <https://www.hellenicshippingnews.com> accessed 3 January 2026.

²⁸ ICC-IMB, 'Pirates are Kidnapping more Seafarers off West Africa - IMB Reports,' <https://www.icc-ccs.org> accessed 3 January 2026.

²⁹ The Maritime Executive, 'Gulf of Guinea Pirates Kidnap Crew from Second Ghanaian Fishing Vessel,' <https://www.maritime-executive.com> accessed 3 January 2026.

³⁰ J. D. Smith, 'The Impact of Kidnapping on Economic Development in Nigeria,' (2020) (27)(4) *Journal of Economic Studies* 123-145.

³¹ N. Onyekpe, 'Kidnapping and National Security in Nigeria: An Appraisal,' (2019) (1)(1) *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 1-15.

³² R. W. Anderson, 'The Social Impact of Kidnapping in Nigeria,' in S. Johnson (ed.), 'Contemporary Issues in Nigerian Society,' (Lagos: Springer Publishing 2019) 145-167.

³³ C. Okereke and Others, 'Combating Kidnapping in Nigeria: Strategies and Best Practices,' (Ekiti: Codesria Publications 2017).

Additionally, efforts have been made to address the root causes of kidnapping through socioeconomic interventions. These include initiatives aimed at reducing poverty, enhancing education and skills development, and promoting social inclusion³⁴

Several challenges impede effective countermeasures against kidnapping in Nigeria. One significant challenge is the limited capacity and resources of law enforcement agencies³⁵. Insufficient training, outdated equipment, and inadequate funding hinder their ability to proactively investigate cases, track down kidnappers, and secure convictions. Another challenge is corruption within the system which poses another obstacle. In some instances, law enforcement personnel themselves may be complicit in kidnappings, either by providing information or actively participating in criminal activities. This compromises the integrity of investigations and undermines public trust in the security apparatus.³⁶ Additionally, the vast geographical size of Nigeria and its porous borders present additional challenges. Kidnappers can easily cross state lines or escape to neighboring countries, making it difficult to apprehend and extradite them.³⁷ Collaboration and information sharing between different law enforcement agencies, as well as international cooperation with neighboring countries, are crucial in addressing this transnational crime effectively.

5. Maritime Drug Trafficking

Thus, a drug refers to a substance that could bring about a change in the biological function through its chemical actions.³⁸ It is also considered as a substance that modifies perceptions, cognition, mood, behaviour and general body functions. They could thus, be considered as chemical modifiers of the living tissues that could bring about physiological and behavioural changes.³⁹

Maritime drug trafficking is a significant global problem, with coastal nations like Nigeria facing immense challenges due to its extensive maritime boundaries. The country's strategic location along major West African shipping routes, coupled with its porous borders, makes it vulnerable to illicit drug smuggling via sea routes. Nigeria serves as both a transit point and a growing market for illegal drugs, posing a multifaceted challenge to national security, public health, and socio-economic stability.⁴⁰ The origin of Nigeria's drugs trafficking problem can be traced to the period just after the Second World War. Nigerian soldiers who had served in Burma, India, came back with seeds of the cannabis sativa plant.⁴¹ They went ahead to experiment with its cultivation and discovered that the plant does very well in some parts of Nigeria, and this led to a rise in the

³⁴ A. B. Iorkya, 'Countering Kidnapping and Terrorism in Nigeria: The Way Forward,' (Abuja: Safari Books Ltd. 2019).

³⁵ G. E. O. Ordu, 'The Challenges of Combating Kidnapping in Nigeria: A Case Study of Law Enforcement Agencies,' (2021) (42)(4) *Journal of Crime and Justice*.

³⁶ A. Adeniyi, 'Tackling the Menace of Kidnapping in Nigeria: An Examination of the Constitutional Implications,' <https://www.researchgate.net> accessed 12 February, 2026.

³⁷ S. Ufot, 'A Critical Examination of the Legal Framework for Tackling Kidnapping in Nigeria,' <https://www.academia.edu> accessed 12 February 2026.

³⁸ N. N. Okoye, 'The Adolescents and Hard Drugs: A Psychological Concern,' in R.U.N Okonkwo and R.O. Okoye (eds), 'The Nigerian Adolescent in Perspective,' (Lagos: The Nigerian Society for Education Publication 2001).

³⁹ R. O. Nnachi, 'Advanced Psychology of Learning and Scientific Enquiries,' (Enugu: J.J. Classic Publishers Ltd. 2007).

⁴⁰ A. B. Fadola, 'Maritime Drug Trafficking: Challenges and Responses for Nigerian Law Enforcement Agencies,' <https://www.researchgate.net> accessed 3 March 2026.

⁴¹ F. Oloruntoba, 'Drug Control Laws in Nigeria,' Paper Presented at the Teachers Orientation Workshop for Plateau State Teachers in Jos, 2006.

cultivation of the plant.⁴² The startlingly high prevalence of illegal drug trafficking is one of the real threats to human and national security. Illegal drug trafficking is a terrible threat to national security, development, and human life. Drugs can easily enter, move, and exit Nigeria because the majority of its borders are porous. However, the state's illicit drug trafficking is plagued by a number of problems, including a failing economy, insecurity, poverty, a high graduate unemployment rate, a lack of basic necessities, a high level of corruption, and the get-rich-quick mentality among Nigerian youths. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), trafficking is defined as "the illicit production and distribution of prohibited goods and services, including the movement of drugs across borders and within countries, usually carried out by organized crime groups." This definition highlights both the illegal nature and the organized networks often involved in trafficking. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) defines drug trafficking as a "global illicit trade involving the cultivation, manufacture, distribution and sale of substances which are subject to drug prohibition laws."⁴³ The international drug regime is relatively well-defined and includes most notably the 1961 UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Drugs, and the 1988 UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. According to USAID in 2013, maritime drug trafficking refers to the illegal transportation and distribution of illicit drugs via sea routes. It is a subset of global drug trafficking, specifically focusing on the exploitation of maritime spaces, including oceans, seas, rivers, and ports, for the smuggling of drugs.⁴⁴ This form of trafficking is particularly challenging due to the vastness of international waters, the high volume of global maritime trade, and the difficulties law enforcement faces in monitoring and securing such expansive areas. Drug trafficking is an illegal activity in which illegally prohibited narcotics are distributed for public use. Narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances are produced, cultivated, manufactured, procured, stored, imported, exported, transported, distributed, offered for sale, dealt in, peddled, and sold under international control.⁴⁵ Maritime drug trafficking is a complicated, multidimensional problem that uses the world's oceans to smuggle illegal drugs. It entails advanced techniques, international networks, and a complex interaction of logistical, legal, and enforcement issues. Traffickers take advantage of the challenges of keeping an eye on large oceanic territory due to the size of maritime transportation. Fighting maritime drug trafficking necessitates a coordinated response comprising increased law enforcement capabilities, regional cooperation, and greater maritime security for nations like Nigeria, which is ideally situated along important trade routes. Maritime drug trafficking in Nigeria has become a significant challenge due to the country's strategic location along the Gulf of Guinea, a major international shipping route. Nigeria serves as a key transit point for illicit drugs, particularly cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamines, being smuggled from Latin America and Asia to Europe and North America. Traffickers exploit Nigeria's vast, under-patrolled coastline, busy ports, and maritime infrastructure to hide drugs among legitimate cargo on vessels or in containers. The country's weak law enforcement, coupled with high levels of corruption and inadequate maritime security, further enables drug traffickers

⁴² I. N. Chris, 'The Nature of Internal Security Problems in African States: The Nigerian Experience,' (2016) (6) *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 38-71.

⁴³ Ubah, 'Impact of NDLEA on Drug Abuse Control in Abia State,' (2017) (2)(3) *Journal of Social Sciences* 132-234.

⁴⁴ USAID, 'The Development Response to Drug Trafficking in Africa: A Programme Guide. USA: United States Agency for International Development,' <https://www.2012-2013.usaid.gov> accessed 4 March 2026.

⁴⁵ K. Adeniyi, 'The Problem of Drug Trafficking in Nigeria,' Seminar Paper Presented at the Department of Sociology, University of Calabar (Unpublished 2011).

to operate with relative impunity. These criminal operations often involve transnational networks that use sophisticated techniques, such as concealment in shipping containers, fishing boats, and the use of small, fast boats to evade detection. The trafficking of drugs through Nigeria's maritime routes has severe implications for national security, the economy, and public health, and requires coordinated efforts both locally and internationally to address effectively.

Nigeria's economy, especially its marine sector, is severely impacted by maritime drug trafficking. Illicit narcotics are increasingly entering Nigeria through its ports, which are vital hubs for global trade. By raising the possibility of delays and increased expenses as a result of stricter customs inspections and security procedures, this jeopardises the nation's legal trading activities. Additionally, because businesses may view Nigeria's maritime routes as unsafe or compromised, the country's status as a hub for drug trafficking may discourage foreign direct investment and international business. Drugs pose a threat to Nigeria's economic growth as well. Around the world, national security councils have economic development as one of their top priorities. Economic strength guarantees the acquisition of weapons, equipment, and the hiring of law enforcement and military staff. Moreover, strategic power projections of the states rely on sustainable economic backup. Nigeria's international relations are also affected by maritime drug trafficking across the nation. Nigeria is frequently seen by international partners as a major participant in international drug smuggling pathways since it serves as a transit location for drugs bound for North America and Europe. Diplomatic ties may be strained as a result of this view, especially with nations that are the ultimate destinations for these illegal narcotics.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Nigeria's participation in the worldwide drug trade may draw more attention from multilateral organisations and international agencies like the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which could result in calls for more accountability and action. Nigeria collaborates with international law enforcement organisations to fight drug trafficking, but if the problem is not adequately addressed, there may be penalties or a reduction in international aid and investment.⁴⁷ Maritime drug trafficking also leads to porous borders and insecurity challenges and a further consequence of this illicit maritime activity is social and public health impact

One of the key responses by Nigerian law enforcement agencies in combating maritime drug trafficking has been the enhancement of maritime security operations, particularly through the Nigerian Navy. The Navy plays a pivotal role in patrolling the country's vast maritime domain, which includes thousands of kilometers of coastline and extensive inland waterways. To improve its capacity, the Navy has undertaken initiatives to upgrade its fleet with modern patrol vessels and surveillance technology. This includes radar systems, aerial drones, and satellite tracking, which enable better monitoring of Nigeria's maritime boundaries. In collaboration with the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), joint operations and increased patrols have been launched to target drug trafficking routes and intercept vessels suspected of carrying illicit drugs. Recognizing that maritime drug trafficking is a transnational issue, Nigeria has bolstered its efforts by collaborating with international partners to improve intelligence sharing and coordination. Nigerian law enforcement agencies, including the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), work closely with organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), INTERPOL, and foreign governments, particularly from Europe and North America.⁴⁸ These collaborations facilitate the exchange of intelligence on drug

⁴⁶ B. Buzan, 'New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-first Century,' (1991) (67)(3) *International Affairs*.

⁴⁷ NDLEA - National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, 2011 Data Collection and Research Report, Lagos.

⁴⁸ NDLEA - National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, 2010 Annual Report.

cartels' movements, shipping routes, and trafficking patterns, helping Nigerian authorities anticipate and intercept drug shipments before they reach Nigerian waters or ports. Additionally, Nigeria has participated in international training programs to enhance the capacity of its law enforcement officers in combating drug smuggling. Joint operations with neighboring countries along the West African coast have also been conducted to address regional trafficking routes. This international cooperation is essential given the global nature of maritime drug trafficking, which often involves multiple jurisdictions.

6. Human Smuggling/Trafficking

Nigeria is a country of origin, transit and destination for victims of trafficking in human beings.⁴⁹ In 2003, Nigeria adopted the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act (TIPLEAA), which constitutes the legal basis for the fight against human trafficking in Nigeria, and which has been significantly amended in 2015.⁵⁰ The Nigerian government considers a person to be trafficked if: (i) the individual was sold in exchange for money; (ii) the individual was put in debt bondage; (iii) his/her travel documents were seized by agents, employers or traffickers; (iv) his/her freedom of movement was restricted; (v) the individual was subjected to or suffered violence or threat against his/her family; (vi) the individual's traffickers gained any form of benefits at their expense through the use of force, deceit, and other forms of exploitation; (vii) the individual has suffered physical, mental and/or sexual abuse; and/or (viii) the individual had no prior knowledge of the exploitative nature of the job they were promised. The law establishes a National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) to enforce and administer the TIPLEAA.⁵¹ International organizations and other experts largely agree that the Nigerian government at the federal and state level particularly in Edo State has made various efforts to address trafficking in human beings.⁵² Sources, however, also posited that this acknowledgment has not been followed up with the allocation of adequate resources to the fight against human trafficking, and that this acknowledgement predominantly concerns human trafficking aimed at the sexual exploitation of women.⁵³ Positive developments during the last couple of years were efforts aimed at the creation of a new National Action Plan against Human Trafficking and the creation of multiple state task forces on human trafficking.⁵⁴ Nigerian victims of human trafficking are exploited within and outside Nigeria. Stakeholders, who were consulted for a report on human trafficking in Nigeria by an international organization, estimated that two-thirds of Nigerian victims of trafficking are victims of domestic human trafficking. The UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children also indicated that this type of trafficking was 'rampant'. NAPTIP data show that in 2019 41.8 % of the victims they rescued were victims of exploitation outside Nigeria. 417 out of 1152

⁴⁹USDOS – US Department of State, 'Trafficking in Persons Report 2020: Nigeria 25 June 2020,' <https://www.state.gov> accessed 4 April 2026.

⁵⁰Nigeria, Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act, 2003 <https://www.lawofnigeria.placng.org> accessed 4 April 2026.

⁵¹ NAPTIP, National Policy on Protection and Assistance to Trafficked Persons in Nigeria, 2008.

⁵² M. G. Giammarinaro, 'US USDOS Trafficking of Persons Report: Nigeria,' <https://www.giammarinaro.net> accessed 4 April 2026.

⁵³ United Nations - UNODC, 'Strengthening the Policy Framework and Response to Human Trafficking in Nigeria,' <https://www.unodc.org> accessed 4 April 2026.

⁵⁴ United Nations -UNODC, 'Nigeria Heeds Global Call, Sets Up State Task Force Against Human Trafficking,' <https://www.unodc.org> accessed 4 April 2026.

individuals were victims of ‘Procurement for Foreign Travel which promotes Prostitution’ or ‘Procurement of Persons for Sexual Exploitation or prostitution externally’.⁵⁵ However, the total number of victims rescued by NAPTIP in 2019 – 1152 individuals – constitutes only a fraction of the estimated total number of Nigerian individuals who are trafficked on an annual basis; in view of the above mentioned Global Slavery Index 2018 which mentioned 1.4 million Nigerians as victims of modern slavery.⁵⁶ Therefore, the NAPTIP figure of rescued victims is not necessarily a reliable picture about the ratio of victims of internal and cross-border trafficking in Nigeria.

Human trafficking in Nigeria affects individuals across various age groups, genders and geographical locations within Nigeria. However, children and women dominated the category of victims that were rescued (inside and outside Nigeria) by NAPTIP in 2019: half of the rescued individuals were children, 44 % women and 6 % men. Girls constituted almost 75 % of the rescued children. These data also include children rescued from other situations than exploitation, as NAPTIP also intervenes in family disputes and custody battles, for instance.⁵⁷ Just recently, from 9-13 July 2024, Nigerian Navy units across the Nation’s maritime domain, rescued 8 female victims of human trafficking, 2 drowning fishermen and arrested 8 male stowaways. Additionally, a sea robbery attempt was foiled within the same period. Specifically, on 9 July 2024, the Quick Response Team of the Nigerian Navy Forward Operating Base Badagry intercepted a wooden passenger boat with 8 females aged between 18-23 years en-route the Benin Republic. Upon interrogation it became obvious that they were being trafficked by a yet to be identified agent. The victims were later handed over to the National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) while further investigation to identify the agent and trafficking syndicate is ongoing.⁵⁸ About 11,000 women from Nigeria entered Italy through the Mediterranean Sea in 2016 alone, up from 1,454 in 2014, according to IOM. These women were probably coerced into engaging in sex trafficking. According to UNHCR (2018), 18,000 Nigerian migrants entered Europe over the Mediterranean in 2017. According to a 2019 UNDP report, Nigeria accounted for 17% (the greatest number) of all African migrants to Europe. A number of factors, including poverty and greed, have been implicated in the rise in global mobility that has resulted in irregular migration and human trafficking. The porous nature of Nigeria’s land and sea borders gives the perpetrators of this crime the momentum to execute them. UNDP (2019) reports that among the returning migrants interviewed in a particular state in Nigeria, 53% had financial help before they travelled. This only suggests underlying unchecked greed. Human trafficking thus remains a significant source of threat to human, national and international security. As UNDP highlights, 93% of irregular migrants’ experience danger during the journey. Nigeria remains a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking, with 65% of the cases happening internally and 35% externally. Through an Act of the National Assembly-Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act (TIPPEA), 2003 (as amended), the Federal Government of Nigeria, a signatory to the 2000 United Nations Convention on Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC) and its Protocol to Suppress, Prevent and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, established the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) in 2003. This was done in order to fulfil Nigeria's international obligation under

⁵⁵ NAPTIP, ‘NAPTIP 2019 Data Analysis 2019,’ <https://www.naptip.gov.ng> accessed 4 April 2026.

⁵⁶ Walk Free Foundation, ‘The Global Slavery Index 2018,’ <https://www.walkfree.org> accessed 4 January 2025. 2018

⁵⁷ EASO COI Report, ‘Nigeria Trafficking in Human Beings,’ <https://www.euaa.europa.eu> accessed 4 January 2025.

⁵⁸ Nigerian Navy, ‘Nigerian Navy Rescues Eight Victims of Human Trafficking Two Drowning Fishermen and Arrests Eight Stowaways in Nigerian Waters,’ <https://www.navy.mil.ng> accessed 4 April 2026.

the Protocol to adopt and review measures to curb the seriousness of the crime of trafficking in persons. Nigeria adopted a multi-sectoral response and an all-inclusive approach, to strengthen the policy framework and response to Human Trafficking by designing its first National Action Plan on Human Trafficking in Nigeria (2009 – 2012).⁵⁹ Pursuant to this, a National Technical Committee was set up in 2006, comprising experts from state and non-state actors to develop, in line with UNTOC and its Protocol, a National Plan; integrate existing and emerging challenges of trafficking in persons into the National Plan in line with the 4 Priorities of NAPTIP's Strategy; and formulate strategies and mobilize resources for its implementation in collaboration with partners. As aptly put by the Chairman, Maritime Security Providers Association of Nigeria (MASPAN) and the Alumni of Maritime Academy of Nigeria, Oron (AMANO) in August, 19th 2024, the goal of the association is to align with critical agencies like NDLEA, Nigerian Navy, Marine Police, NIMASA, NAFDAC, and NAPTIP in making sure that Drug and Human Smuggling/Trafficking in the maritime domain are reduced; if not eradicated, perpetrators are penalised in a way innocent parties are not made to pay the price, and the industry is not deprived of its growth potentials. This is what the government of Nigeria must do to fight human trafficking.⁶⁰

7. Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing

The issue of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing is another significant marine crime issue. Any fishing activity carried out by vessels from nations that are members of fishery organisations in contravention of national and international laws and regulations is referred to as "IUU fishing."⁶¹ Food security and marine ecosystems are seriously threatened by IUU fishing, which takes place in a number of maritime zones in both domestic and international waters. It also contributes to widespread overfishing.⁶² The fishery sector is crucial to the Nigerian economy for contributing a considerable amount of percentage to the nation's Gross Domestic Product. It is noted that fishery is a vital economic sector as regards to employment, enterprise development, food security and nutritional value, most especially for rural people. Recent times, IUU fishing activities have been threatening the Fishery industry in Nigeria and West African states at large. It is estimated that Nigeria loses about 70 million dollars annually to IUU fishing.⁶³

Activities that are carried out by national or foreign vessels in waters under a State's jurisdiction without that State's consent or in violation of its laws and regulations, by vessels flying the flag of States that are parties to a relevant regional fisheries management organisation but that operate in violation of the conservation and management measures adopted by that organisation and by which the States are bound, or by relevant provisions of the applicable international law, or by vessels that violate national laws or international obligations, including those made by cooperating States to a relevant regional fisheries management organisation, are all considered illegal fishing. While activities that have either not been reported or have been misreported to the appropriate national

⁵⁹ NAPTIP, 'National Action Plan on Human Trafficking in Nigeria: 2022 – 2026,' <https://www.naptip.gov.ng> accessed 4 April 2026.

⁶⁰ H. Uche, 'Maritime Experts Set to Tackle Illicit Drug Trade, Human Trafficking at Nigeria Ports,' *The Sun* (Lagos, 19 August 2024).

⁶¹ E. D. Papastavridis, 'Crimes at sea: A law of the sea perspective,' (2014) *Martinus Nijhoff Publishers* 3 – 52.

⁶² G. A. Petrossian, 'Preventing Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing: A Situational Approach,' (2015) *Biological Conservation*, 189, 39-48.

⁶³ O. Sunday, 'Nigeria Loses Over \$70 Million to Illegal Fishing and Others, Yearly,' *The Guardian* (Lagos: 1 March 2018).

authority in violation of national laws and regulations, or that are carried out within the purview of a relevant regional fisheries management organisation and have not been reported or have been misreported in violation of that organization's reporting procedures, are referred to as unreported fishing.⁶⁴ Finally, a catch is considered unregulated if fishing is conducted in the area of application of a relevant regional fisheries management organization that is conducted by vessels without nationality, or by those flying the flag of a State not party to that organization, or by a fishing entity, in a manner that is not consistent with or contravenes the conservation and management measures of that organization; or in areas or for fish stocks in relation to which there are no applicable conservation or management measures and where such fishing activities are conducted in a manner inconsistent with State responsibilities for the conservation of living marine resources under international law. Like most countries in West Africa, Nigeria's coastal waters contain diverse species of fish, which contribute to the food and economic security of its people. Small-scale fishing operations contribute 80% of locally produced fish and support the livelihoods of 24 million Nigerians. Seventy three percent of those involved in fisheries in Nigeria are women. The overall GDP contribution from fishing – small scale and industrial – was 0.84% in 2019 and 1.09% in 2020.⁶⁵ The fisheries sector is therefore a route to socioeconomic development in Nigeria. But it also faces threats. One of these is environmental pollution, primarily from the oil industry. Pollution degrades the maritime environment, destroys fish stocks and reduces the catch. Another threat is illegal fishing, as our previous research has found. Nigeria, loses 600million dollars annually to IUU fishing done by foreign vessels as a result of inadequate manpower to police the country's vast coastline.⁶⁶ Nigeria spends 800 million dollars annually on fish importation, being the fourth largest importer of fish in the world. Nigeria imports frozen fish varieties, including Mackerel locally called Titus, Herrings locally called Shawa, Horse Mackerel locally called Kote, Blue Whitening, locally called Panla and Argentina Silus locally called Ojuyobo as well as the popular Croaker fish. Most of these fishes are taken away by foreign countries that are into fishing from Nigerian territorial waters and reimported by Nigerians at exorbitant prices.⁶⁷ Nigerian and African markets receive those farmed fish in exchange. According to a report titled Fisheries Crimes Activities in West African Coastal Region. Nigeria, fish imports from Iceland, Russia, Norway, and the Netherlands totalled 71 million, 56 million, 43 million, and 174 million dollars in 2018. The report also disclosed that more than 450 Chinese vessels engage in illicit fishing around the West African coast, including Nigeria. This is in addition to foreign vessels and artisanal fishing in Nigeria's coastal regions in Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Delta, Rivers, and Cross Rivers States that link rural waterways to the Gulf of Guinea, as well as inland waterways in places like Badore and Epe in Lagos State.⁶⁸

IUU fishing has economic impacts for fishers and consumers in Nigeria and Africa at large. In the short term, these impacts may be positive because any fish catch brings returns to fishers and cheaper fish to consumers. However, in the medium and long terms, the impacts become negative

⁶⁴ D. P. Yonmo, 'Nigeria in the Context of Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) Fishing in West African Coast,' (2022) (2)(1) *ESCAE Journal of Management and Security Studies (EJMSS)*.

⁶⁵ I. Okafor and B. B. Sayra, 'How Illegal Fishing Harms Nigeria and What to do About it?' (2021) (United Kingdom) *The University of St Andrews*.

⁶⁶ E. Abiodun, 'Nigerian Losses \$600 Million Annually to Illegal Fishing,' *Thisday Newspaper* (Lagos: 16 September 2019).

⁶⁷ O. Olawoyin, 'Special Report: With Nigeria's Fishes Disappearing Amid Government Neglect, Nation Spends Billions on Importation,' *Premium Times* (Ogun: 24 November 2018).

⁶⁸ E. Abiodun, (n66).

since a reduction in fish stocks leads to increased fishing costs, higher prices to consumers and economic losses to the tourism sector.⁶⁹ IUU also causes eradication of fish protein which is uniquely poised to contribute to food security because fish is a highly efficient form of protein - 150 grams of fish provide 50-60 percent of an adult's daily protein requirement and fish consumption by expectant mothers aids their children's neurodevelopment and these proteins and nutrients remain particularly crucial in the first two years of a child's life.⁷⁰ Another impact of IUU fishing is food insecurity. The deliberate act of using prime fishes caught in Nigeria and the entire west African coast to be converted into fishmeal and fish oil, in order to feed onshore farmed animals and fishes in US, Europe and Asia is capable of causing colossal damages like scarcity of fish for human consumption, thereby creating food insecurity for the poor in Nigeria and West Africa at large. According to the Federal Department of Fisheries in Lagos, Nigeria's annual fish demand is estimated at 3.32 million metric tonnes, while domestic production is only about 1.12 million metric tonnes.⁷¹ Local women and fishermen must cast their nets farther out into the ocean, endangering their lives in the process, because there are fewer fish along the shore. Artisanal fishermen encounter large fishing vessels when they venture far out into the ocean. This poses considerably more danger.

Despite the important contribution that fishing makes to the livelihood of Nigerians, government neglects this sector. There is serious sea blindness and lack of political will in Nigeria. This is evident in the marginal budgetary allocation the sector receives yearly. This is because most of the leaders lack the knowledge of maritime opportunities. This explains why the presence of the government is very remote from the littoral villages and towns. The inability of the government to provide the basic needs of the people in the West African states, has made criminal gangs to provide government functions – security, employment, and social amenities to villages. Therefore, making individuals to become members of such criminal gangs. Ransoms gotten from kidnapped crew members, the sales of illegal oil, funds gotten from fishing trawlers illegitimately makes the economy of the riverine villages to boom. Also, corruption has ripped off the essence of government institutions like NIMASA, NN, NPA and so on. There is lack of monitoring, control and surveillance unit of the Nigeria's Federal Fisheries Department within the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development due to lack of budgetary allocation, patrol boats, enough personnel and surveillance equipment to effectively do their job.

Although the laws like the Inland Fisheries Act, 1992 regulates and protects fishes and fishing in Nigeria, however, the enforcement and implementation of the law is another problem. There are lacuna and this law needs amendment. For instance, the Act provides that no person should operate a motor fishing craft in Nigeria without being licensed⁷² and no person shall fish with a gear constructed with net webbing of less than 76 millimeters. Failure to comply is a penalty of N500 or 6 months imprisonment.⁷³ These penalties are not punitive enough to serve as deterrents. Section 6 of the Act prohibits the use of explosives, poison, electricity or noxious substance to fish and

⁶⁹ J. S. Zimmerhackel and Others, 'How Shark Conservation in the Maldives Affects Demand for Dive Tourism,' (2018) (69) *Tourism Management* 263–71.

⁷⁰ FAO, 'The International Plan of Action to Prevent and Deter Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing,' <https://www.link.springer.com> accessed 5 March 2026.

⁷¹ Desert Herald, 'Nigeria Loses \$600 Million Annually to Illegal Fishing,' <https://www.desertherald.ng> accessed 5 March 2026.

⁷² Inland Fisheries Act, s1.

⁷³ Inland Fisheries Act, s5.

failure to comply with the law is either a fine of N3000 or 2 years imprisonment.⁷⁴ The Act further provides that no person shall export or import a live fish or any other aquatic animal without the permission of the Minister and where this is contravened the punishment is either a fine of N25,000 or imprisonment for 5 years.⁷⁵ The penalty for an individual offender and a corporate body is the same according to section 12 of the Act. This legislation does not really protect the fishing industry in Nigeria. To make the fishing sector grow and develop economically and letter, there is need for an awareness campaign for the use of sustainable fishing practices for long lasting utilization of fisheries in Nigeria waters. This can be done through seminars, radio and fish festivals. Also, solving the problem of IUU fishing in Nigeria requires that the Federal Department of Fisheries (FDF) should be supported to operate effectively. It should be adequately funded. FDF constitutional powers should not be usurped by other government agencies. Furthermore, holistic and collaborative approach by the various agencies, regional and international is crucial to address fisheries crimes.

8. Illegal Ocean Dumping

Since marine pollution is a major problem, practically every nation has strong laws prohibiting ships from dumping oil or sewage into their coastal waters. Marine pollution is the result of human-used or dispersed materials that enter the water and have negative impacts, such as particles, noise, excess carbon dioxide, industrial, agricultural, and residential waste, or invading creatures.⁷⁶ Illegal Ocean dumping is the disposal of highly toxic and reactive waste materials, such as dredged materials, industrial waste, and radioactive waste, into the ocean. Marine dumping or ocean pollution includes the deliberate disposal of garbage including waste from factories or industries, all kinds of ships, sewage, waste from aircraft, offshore platforms etc into the oceans. This not only pollutes the water but also degrades habitats of marine species. It can lead to coastal erosion and impact the health of the aquatic ecosystem. This happens because industrial waste contains hazardous materials like cryolite, DDT, mercury and even radioactive materials.⁷⁷

The oceans and seas cover 70% or two-thirds of our planet's surface and are vital for sustaining life on Earth. They are responsible for many natural processes like rain and climate regulation, not to mention the millions of species that call them home. They also allow us to conduct maritime trade and connect economies across the world. However, humans have wreaked havoc on oceans by overfishing and dumping all kinds of waste into the waters. Accidents such as the BP oil spill and Samarco dam collapse are striking instances of how badly human activities can destroy the rich marine ecosystem.⁷⁸ Ballast water from ships can introduce harmful organisms into new environments which can become invasive in the new area. Also, treatments for ballast water like electrochemical treatment, chlorination and so on can create disinfection by-products which have negative effects on mammals.⁷⁹ The maritime industry contributes its own fair share of pollution

⁷⁴ *ibid*, s6.

⁷⁵ *ibid*, s8.

⁷⁶ C. J. Payi, 'Why is Nigerian Maritime Security Important but yet Challenging,' <https://www.academia.edu> accessed 17 February 2024.

⁷⁷ Z. Ahmed, 'Ocean Pollution: 6 Things That Make It Worse,' <https://www.marineinsight.com> accessed 5 March 2026.

⁷⁸ C. J. Payi, 'Why is Nigerian Maritime Security Important but yet Challenging,' <https://www.academia.edu> accessed 17 May 2026.

⁷⁹ C. J. Payi, 'Why is Nigerian Maritime Security Important but yet Challenging,' <https://www.academia.edu> accessed 17 May 2026.

within Nigerian ports and communities by way of crude oil spills and inappropriate waste management facilities. These spills often occur on wetlands needed for commercial maritime activities and economic survival by local inhabitants. The inadequate disposal of ship waste by privately owned waste management facilities can lead to the encouragement of illicit disposal of waste and ballast into the sea before registering into ports and terminals. Such waste can introduce toxic and noxious liquids into waters affecting marine life forms and indirectly, local communities. as a result of such incident, a negative impact can be seen in public health, fishing communities, agriculture and economic benefits.⁸⁰

This ocean dumping is caused by humans who for instance mine under the oceans. Mining under the ocean for silver, gold, copper, cobalt, and so on. is a very serious source of ocean pollution. Recent studies have proved that the increasing noise pollution in the sea also threatens marine life. It can create stress for marine mammals like dolphins, whales etc. and disrupts their breeding and feeding patterns. Noise from ships also hampers the communication between dolphins. Spilling of oil from offshore rigs and tankers is very dangerous to human and aquatic animals' health. Also, the littering of items like fishing lines, hooks, plastic etc. can trap pelicans and other seabirds, which can strangle them. The wastes dumped into the oceans tend to have toxic substances, which soak in all the oceanic oxygen. This leads to a marked depletion of oxygen available to mammals and other fish causing them to die in their natural habitat. Every year, according to reports, more than one million seabirds are being killed by ocean pollution. In addition, thousands of dolphins and porpoises are dying every year due to increased human intervention and this is economically detrimental to Nigeria's growth. To prevent further degradation of the oceanic environment, several laws and regulations have been enacted. Harmful Waste (Special Criminal Provisions) Act of 1988 prohibits the carrying, depositing and dumping of harmful waste on any land, territorial waters and matters relating thereto.⁸¹ It prohibits the dumping of harmful waste into the air, land, or waters of Nigeria without lawful authority. Also, in giving effect in Nigeria to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution by Garbage,⁸² the Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution by Garbage) Regulations, 2012 was enacted to prohibit the disposal of garbage in the marine environment save in accordance with the provisions of the Regulations and the Act.⁸³ Also, the Marine Environment (Sea Dumping) Regulations, 2012 in giving effect in Nigeria to the 1996 Protocol on the Convention on Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matters 1978, makes it an offence to dump wastes within the Nigerian marine environment.⁸⁴ One good thing about these laws and regulations is that the punishment for an offender is life imprisonment for disposal of hazardous wastes⁸⁵ and N10,000,000 and/or imprisonment for a term of 6 months for dumping of wastes. This will serve as a serious warning to those violators of the laws.

However, from the provisions of the 1988 Act, it therefore means that when someone with lawful authority can carry, deposit, dump or cause to be carried, deposited or dumped, or can be in possession for the purpose of carrying, depositing or dumping, any harmful waste on any land or in any territorial waters or contiguous zone or Exclusive Economic Zone of Nigeria. What is lawful

⁸⁰C. C. Maduekwe, 'Maritime Environmental Violations Within Nigeria and Its Impacts,' <https://digitalscholarship.tsu.edu> accessed 5 May 2026.

⁸¹ HW Act 1988, s1.

⁸² MARPOL ANNEX IV.

⁸³ Merchant Shipping Regulation 1

⁸⁴ Marine Environment Regulation 1.

⁸⁵ HW Act 1988, s6.

authority was not defined in the Act. Furthermore, the enforcement of these laws and regulations by the relevant authorities like NPA, NIMASA, NN, Marine Police, NOSDRA and NESREA have been problematic. Sometimes those at the helm of affairs in these institutions permit or participate in these crimes or are being compromised and they turn blind eyes when these illicit activities take place. Nigeria and Nigerians must get rid of corruption or curb it to the barest minimum and properly or critically regulate the activities in her marine environment if they want a clean, safe and secured waters. Additionally, a feasible solution to minimizing maritime environmental pollution would be to use an alternative power source for ships when stationed at port, creation of laws and emergency funds designed to protect the environment and develop government-controlled waste management reception facilities.

9. Illegal Carrying of Weapons and Artillery

Illicit firearms underpin much of organized crimes as we know it today. Research in a number of regions has found that whether illegally produced, recycled from past conflicts, diverted from government stocks or smuggled from areas where the supply is legal and readily available, firearms and ammunition trafficking strengthen and expand illicit markets across the world. Illegal carrying of weapon is where someone owns, possesses or intentionally concealed a firearm, or other instruments customarily used or intended for probable use as a dangerous weapon, on one's person. It could also be the ownership, possession, custody, or use of any tools, or dynamite, or nitro-glycerine, or explosives, or other instrumentality customarily used by thieves or burglars at any time by any person with the intent to commit a crime.⁸⁶

The GI-TOC's Global Organized Crime Index 2021 ranks arms trafficking as the third most prevalent criminal market globally, and is particularly rife in Africa, the Americas and Asia. By enabling organized crime and criminal markets more generally, the illegal arms trade represents a serious threat to community resilience and democracy. According to the Index, arms trafficking is linked to human trafficking and smuggling, as well as to the illicit trade of non-renewable resources.⁸⁷ The origins of illicit weapons in Nigeria may be traced to both domestic and foreign sources. The internal sources include indigenous manufacturing, remnants of firearms used during the civil war from 1967 to 1970, and theft of weapons from the government's arsenal. However, various external sources contribute to this issue. These sources include smuggling from neighbouring countries, the illicit activities of government-accredited importers, the return of individuals from international peacekeeping operations, insurgents and dissidents from neighbouring countries, and the activities of multinational oil companies operating in the oil-rich Niger Delta region.⁸⁸ The illicit firearms trade is a threat to sustainable development, peace and security. Its proliferation not only escalates conflict but also facilitates other criminal activities and the primary catalyst for social unrest, rioting, tension, and bloodshed.⁸⁹ The persistent use of tiny firearms amplifies the magnitude and endurance of violence and instability. The relentless pursuit of lucrative gains has fostered the expansion of the armaments trade. The local producers have generated money from their company, which, in turn, contributes to the escalation of violence in

⁸⁶ Louisiana State Legislature, 'Illegal Carrying of Weapons,' <https://www.legis.la.gov> accessed 5 May 2026.

⁸⁷ GI-TOC, 'Arms Trafficking and Organised Crime,' <https://www.globalinitiative.net> accessed 5 May 2026.

⁸⁸ A. V. Elemanya, 'Introduction to Security and Strategic Studies,' (2018) *Emmanest Venture Publishers*.

⁸⁹ B. G. Ibani, 'Nigeria's Defense Regulative System and National Security: Implications of Arms Smuggling and Trafficking in Nigeria,' (2024) (4)(2) *AKSU Journal of Administration and Corporate Governance*.

the nation.⁹⁰ An unfortunate aspect of the socio-economic repercussions of armed smuggling/trafficking is the emergence of cultism in Nigerian elementary, secondary, and university educational institutions. The majority consists of those who are offsprings of the political elites, whose parents have instilled a culture of gun ownership. The influx of small arms and light weapons into the nation has significantly undermined the years of peaceful coexistence and socioeconomic ties among Nigerians.⁹¹ This has led to the emergence of fear, which in turn has sparked civil disturbances and riots, particularly between Christians and Muslims in the northern region. Additionally, it has resulted in electoral violence, the politicization of ethno-religious differences, negative impacts on livelihood and food security, brain drain, the phenomenon of individuals leaving the country (Japa syndrome), broader economic costs, gender-related issues, the forced closure of schools, social disruption, internal displacement, the rise of ethnic militias, high levels of unemployment and poverty, and domestic demands for resource control. The Firearms Act of 1959 serves as the primary legislative framework that regulates the manufacturing, use, importation, and exportation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) in Nigeria.⁹² According to Section 23 of the 1959 Act, it is prohibited for any individual to manufacture, assemble, or repair firearms or ammunition, unless it is done at a public armoury or arsenals specifically designated for the armed forces, with the President's consent, given at his discretion.⁹³ Concerning the curbing of illicit carrying or possession of weapons and artillery in Nigeria, state failure and weak government institutions have attributed numerous factors namely, issues of corruption, mismanagement of institutions, weak political process, and lack of political will to overhaul the security structure are the major reasons why arms smuggling and trafficking persists and still on the increase in the country.

10. Maritime Crimes as Threats to Oil and Gas Installation in Nigeria

Nigeria is estimated to have the second-largest amount of proven crude oil reserves in Africa, the eight largest among OPEC countries, and the tenth largest in the world. The country is the largest oil producer in Africa. It also has the eighth largest gas reserves in the world and is among the world's top five exporters of Liquefied Natural Gas. With a population of about two hundred and three million (2003), it has one of the largest economies in Africa. Nigeria continues to dominate as Africa's largest producer of Crude Oil, boasting proven reserves of 37.50 billion barrels and a production capacity of approximately 2.19 million barrels per day (mbpd).⁹⁴ However, the economy is still hugely dependent on crude oil. Crude oil exports account for over eighty percent of foreign exchange earnings and up to sixty-six percent of government revenue.

Nigeria's offshore domain is one of the most fertile hydrocarbon provinces in the world. Current oil reserves in the country are estimated at thirty-six billion barrels and natural gas reserves at over two hundred and two trillion cubic feet. But large-scale theft and other security challenges have prevented Nigeria, Africa's top producer, from producing up to its optimum estimated capacity of

⁹⁰ T. C. Adetiba, 'Socio-political and Economic Development Under Threat: The Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Nigeria,' (2012) (2)(5) *Greener Journal of Social Sciences (GJSS)* 179- 185.

⁹¹ K. C. Mark, and J. C. Iwebi, 'Border Control and Arms Smuggling in Nigeria: Glitches and Diagnosis,' (2019) (4)(6) *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology (IJISRT)*, 903- 910.

⁹² Firearms Act 1959, s1.

⁹³ *ibid*, s23.

⁹⁴ G. Komolafe, 'Nigeria: Leading Crude Oil Producer in Africa,' <https://www.nuprc.gov.ng> accessed 6 January 2025.

four million barrels per day (bpd), depriving the country of potential revenue and this is as a result of the vulnerability of the nation's maritime domain and offshore oil installations.⁹⁵ The waters of Nigeria's oil-rich coast have been a hotspot for piracy incidents over the past decade, according to the IMB. Pirates often kidnap crew for ransom and sometimes siphon off the petroleum products. Piracy manifests as low-intensity insurgency when it comes to oil exploration.⁹⁶ Oil installations in Nigeria have come under attack by pirates and terrorists with oil production in Nigeria dropping by twenty percent at the peak of attacks in the year 2006 costing the Nigerian economy approximately two hundred and two million dollars.⁹⁷ Although most of the attacks were on onshore facilities and those within the territorial waters of Nigeria, the stakes went up in the year 2008 when the Bonga oil platform, an FPSO producing about 202,000 barrels of crude oil per day and located about one hundred and twenty nautical miles offshore Nigeria, was attacked by a militant group, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta.⁹⁸ The operator of the platform, Shell, was forced to shut it down for three weeks. MEND has been classified as a terrorist organisation.⁹⁹ Nigeria is at present estimated to be losing about one million barrels of crude oil per day to attacks on its oil installations and oil theft.¹⁰⁰ Security problems in parts of the Niger Delta remains a major concern with persisting incidents of criminality, kidnapping and sabotage as well as onshore and offshore piracy,' Royal Dutch Shell Plc, the largest international producer in Nigeria, said in a statement. Experts say lack of a critical infrastructure protection policy and strategy, limited maritime domain awareness, inadequate naval presence, poor cooperation and coordination among maritime agencies, poor fleet support facilities and poor funding are major factors militating against the protection of offshore assets in the country. Insecurity in Nigeria's offshore basin is a major contributor to the steep production cost of crude in the country.¹⁰¹ The long and short of it is that even in the area of crude oil production, which accounts for eighty percent of her export earnings, Nigeria is uncompetitive and cannot go toe to toe with other oil producing nations to fight for a piece of the market. In effect, it is faced with far worse prospects than other oil producing nations, not just in terms of her inability to find buyers for her crude oil, but is saddled with the stark reality of dwindling foreign exchange reserves and an annual budget that is not worth the paper on which it is written. Nigeria needs to cut its cost of production and ramp up oil output. In the year 2019, Dutch oil major, Shell Petroleum Development Company, deplored a 10,000 barrels daily oil theft on its pipelines. The economic sabotage amounted to about two hundred million naira every twenty-four hours. The loss translates to government's fifty-five percent revenue going down the drain. SPDC's oil production accounts for over ninety percent of Nigeria's foreign exchange.¹⁰² Crude oil theft on the pipeline network resulted in a loss of around 11,000 barrels per day of oil in the year 2018, which were more than

⁹⁵O. Oladipo, 'Offshore Security Threats Weighing on Nigeria's Oil Fortunes,' *Businessday* (Lagos, 17 February 2020) 45.

⁹⁶IMB First Quarter Report 2019, <https://www.businessday.ng> accessed 6 July 2026.

⁹⁷L. Otto, 'Nigeria and Piracy: the Evolution of a Complex Problem,' <https://www.maritimeatgreenwich.wordpress.com> accessed 6 July 2026.

⁹⁸L. Onoja, 'Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation Act 2015,' <https://www.imli.org> accessed 6 July 2026.

⁹⁹K. James and P. Raul, 'International Maritime Security Law,' <https://www.lawofthesea.mandela.ac.za> accessed 6 July 2026.

¹⁰⁰M. Buhari: 'Victory Offers Mixed Messages for Gulf of Guinea Shipping, HIS Maritime Safety at Sea,' *Daily News* (Abuja, 2 February 2013).

¹⁰¹N. Ijeoma; 'Will Kyari Address the Elephant in the Room?' *Thisday* (Abuja, 16 March 2020) 56.

¹⁰²A. Godwin, 'Shell Decries N200 Million Daily Oil Loss,' *The Guardian* (Port Harcourt, 10 September 2019).

the projected 9,000 barrels per day in 2017. The oil major had since the year 2012 identified more than 1,160 illegal theft points in the region. Oil theft and artisanal refining of stolen crude are criminal acts that are not only against the law but also capable of mortgaging the future of the country. Illegal refining and third-party interference were main sources of pollution in the area.

The National Economic Council disclosed that the nation lost about two million barrels of crude oil production to theft between January and June 2019. In the year 2016, the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative disclosed that the nation lost over one hundred and thirty-six million barrels of crude oil estimated at eleven billion dollars through pilfering and sabotage between the years 2009 and 2011.¹⁰³ Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation indicated that between June 2018 and June 2019, it recorded a total of 2,038 vandalized points on its crude oil lines, from where theft is perhaps also carried out.¹⁰⁴

Much of the piracy and armed robbery at sea plaguing the Gulf of Guinea is a product of the disorderliness that surrounds the regional oil industry. A large share of recent attacks targeted oil vessels. Other incidents generally take the form of ship-boardings with the aim of stealing equipment, money and other portable valuables that are immediately transferred to a secondary skiff or barge to transfer to land. Outright hijackings also take place. However, unlike ransoms being demanded of vessels and crew in Somalia, the main objective of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is the stealing of oil cargo which is later sold at the black market. Nigeria must beef up security onshore and offshore if the country truly intends to tackle this menace and grow economically.

11. Maritime Crimes Causes Loss of Government Revenue

The loss of state revenue resulting from theft of crude oil, illegal bunkering, piracy, smuggling, and other maritime-related criminal activities is one of the most severe economic effects of maritime crimes. Oil theft lowers the amount of crude that can be legally exported, which in turn lowers royalties, taxes, and other government revenue.¹⁰⁵ The IMF has previously noted that Nigeria's income and external-sector challenges are significantly impacted by oil theft and production losses.¹⁰⁶ Oil theft, illicit fishing, smuggling, vandalism, and kidnapping have all been identified by Nigerian officials as risks to the country's income and investor trust in more recent times

12. Maritime Crimes Increase Cost of Maritime Trade

Transporting products across Nigerian waterways is more expensive due to piracy, armed robbery, and other maritime crimes. Shipowners might have to pay more for:

- security staff and apparatus;
- protection of vessels;
- risk management and route planning;
- more fuel and travel time;
- the cost of insurance; and
- the delays brought on by increased security protocols.

¹⁰³ O. Adeniyi, 'The growing Menace of 'Petro-Piracy,' *Thisday* (Lagos, 15 September 2019).

¹⁰⁴ E. Alike, 'Taming the Monster of Oil Bunkering and Gas Pipeline Vandalism,' <https://www.thisdaylive.com> accessed 6 July 2026.

¹⁰⁵ IMF eLibrary, 'Nigeria: 2013 Article IV Consultation—Staff Report; Press Release and Statement by the Executive Director for Nigeria,' <https://www.elibrary.imf.org> accessed 10 July 2026.

¹⁰⁶ N. M. Abdallah, 'Oil theft affecting Nigerian economy –IMF,' <https://www.dailytrust.com> accessed 10 July 2026.

Piracy and illicit marine activities can deter ships from calling at ports, cause delays, and raise the cost of logistics and insurance, according to research on the Gulf of Guinea.¹⁰⁷

13. Maritime Crimes Create Loss of Investment and Investor Confidence

For both domestic and foreign investors, maritime instability breeds uncertainty. When criminal activity poses significant operational hazards, investors are less likely to invest in ships, ports, offshore petroleum activities, fisheries, tourism, and other maritime industries. This is especially crucial for Nigeria's developing Blue Economy strategy. The Federal Government has acknowledged that harnessing the marine sector's economic potential requires a safe and stable maritime environment.¹⁰⁸

14. Maritime Crimes Lead to Destruction of the Fishing Industry

For Nigeria's coastal fishing communities, piracy, armed robberies at sea, and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing have especially dire consequences. Fish supply depletion, equipment and vessel theft or damage, decreased catches, higher fishing expenses, and income loss are some of the repercussions. Attacks on fishing vessels have decreased fishing activity and negatively impacted household livelihoods and food security, according to recent research on Nigeria's coastal communities. Because fishing benefits not only fishermen but also fish processors, traders, boat builders, transporters, and other industries in coastal areas, it has a multiplier impact.¹⁰⁹

15. Maritime Crimes Cause Environmental and Economic Damage

Nigeria's marine ecosystem is seriously harmed by oil theft, illegal bunkering, illegal dumping, and other maritime environmental crimes. Mangroves, fisheries, agricultural land, and other natural resources that coastal populations rely on can all be destroyed by pollution. Therefore, the financial impact goes beyond the immediate expense of clearing up pollution and includes lost revenue from fisheries, decreased agricultural output, negative health effects, and harm to biodiversity.¹¹⁰ Some recent writers and authors specifically identify oil pollution, unsustainable fishing and artisanal crude-oil refining as threats to the sustainability of Nigeria's blue economy.

16. The Way Forward/Recommendation

a) Strengthening Legal Enforcement: The existence of antipiracy legislation is an effective counterpiracy measure. Thus, the enactment of the Suppression of Piracy and Other Maritime Offences (SPOMO) Act in 2019 is a significant step in Nigeria's counterpiracy efforts. But there should be full implementation of the SPOMO Act and faster prosecution of offenders so that it

¹⁰⁷ F. Yercan and Others, 'The Economic Impact of Piracy: a Critical Assessment of Maritime Security and Trade Disruptions in the Gulf of Guinea,' <https://www.link.springer.com> accessed 11 August 2026.

¹⁰⁸ S. Anyanwu, 'President Tinubu Unveils New Security, Economic Blueprint to Harness Nigeria's Marine Wealth,' <https://fmimo.gov.ng> accessed 10 August 2026.

¹⁰⁹ S. A. Asua and C. Nwangwu, 'Maritime Insecurity, Environmental Degradation and the Development of Nigeria's Blue Economy,' <https://www.https://journals.sagepub.com> accessed 11 August 2026.

¹¹⁰ S. A. Asua and C. Nwangwu, 'Maritime Insecurity, Environmental Degradation and the Development of Nigeria's Blue Economy,' <https://www.https://journals.sagepub.com> accessed 11 August 2026.

will enhance deterrence. However, the absence of political will to curb piracy by the Nigerian government, impede or affect negatively the proper enforcement of the SPOMO Act in curbing piracy and other maritime crimes in Nigeria. It is worthy to noted that the existence of law without proper enforcement mechanism and interpretation would not curb maritime crimes.

b) Regional Collaboration: A framework for cooperative maritime security activities between West and Central African States is provided by initiatives like the Yaoundé Code of Conduct (2013). It establishes a cooperative framework for joint operations, information sharing, and maritime safety. The Code's primary objective is to manage and reduce considerably the adverse impacts derived from piracy, armed robbery against ships and other illicit maritime activities, such as Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. There is need for member States to come together and cooperate and ensure that they join forces to combat maritime crimes.

c) Anti-Corruption Measures: There is serious need to strengthen accountability mechanisms within maritime agencies for critical and sustainable enforcement or development. The integrity of anti-piracy efforts is seriously compromised by bribery and coordination between criminal networks and law enforcement or judicial personnel. Because of a lack of confidence, this problem affects institutional structures as well as frontline personnel, undermining regional collaboration and impeding coordinated naval operations. The disruption of enforcement capabilities caused by ingrained corruption is exemplified by security personnel disclosing patrol schedules for financial benefit. This therefore calls for a strengthening of the anti-corruption measures.

d) Improvement in Technology: It is crucial to invest in integrated maritime domain awareness systems, drones, and satellite surveillance. The fundamental elements of marine drug interdiction and other illicit water activities are surveillance and detection, which allow authorities to keep an eye on large oceanic areas and precisely identify illegal activity. While detection concentrates on spotting particular risks, including illicit drugs or questionable activity, surveillance essentially entails the ongoing inspection of marine zones, vessels, and cargo. When combined, they provide a vital line of defence against the sophisticated strategies used by drug traffickers and pirates in international waterways.

17. Conclusion

Nigeria's economic growth is significantly impeded and hampered by maritime crimes. It reduced oil production, lower government revenue, disruption of maritime trade, higher insurance and transportation costs, loss of investment, unemployment, destruction of fisheries, and degradation of the marine environment are all consequences that go beyond the immediate loss of property or income. Nigeria's capacity to realize the economic potential of its blue economy is hampered, and its competitiveness as a maritime hub is diminished. Therefore, fighting maritime crimes should be seen as a crucial part of Nigeria's larger economic development strategy rather than just a national security obligation. Therefore, protecting Nigeria's maritime economy requires effective enforcement of maritime rules, increased understanding of the maritime domain, interagency cooperation, regional collaboration, and preservation of coastal livelihoods.

Recognizing piracy and other maritime crimes as developmental issues rather than just maritime security challenge is essential. For the region to achieve long-term peace and economic stability, fundamental issues like inequality, exclusion, and poor governance must be addressed. In

summary, the marine insecurity facing the Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea is not only a local problem. It affects trade, investment, and human security on a worldwide scale. Coordinated initiatives that support sustainable development, empower local communities, and harmonize legal systems are necessary to address it. Nigeria can only defeat maritime crimes and ensure a more affluent future by using this integrated strategy, which combines enforcement, inclusion, and economic change.