

## **MARITIME SECURITY IN SEYCHELLES**

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This concept note introduces the SAFE SEAS case study of the maritime security sector in the Seychelles. Drawing on the SPIP methodology (SAFESEAS 2017), the country profile is introduced, the organization of maritime space reviewed and the core maritime security issues identified by the country are discussed. The Seychelles provides a particularly interesting case as an archipelagic state in which oceans policy for sustainable development and maritime security are core drivers of the governmental agenda. Seychelles has emerged as a leading voice in the international debate on the blue economy and the implementation of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 dealing with sustainable management of ocean resources. As a close maritime neighbour to Somalia, the country has also been directly affected by Somali-based piracy, became a regional hub for counter-piracy, and also significantly benefitted from external capacity building.

### **SMALL ISLAND STATE, BIG MARITIME NATION**

The Seychelles archipelago is in the western Indian Ocean approximately 4° south of the equator, and consists of 115 islands, out of which 42 are granitic and the other 113 are coralline (Braithwaite 1984:38). With only 455 km<sup>2</sup> of land mass and a population of less than 100,000 permanent residents, the country is a small island state. But it is a big maritime nation. The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) stretches across 1.4 million Km<sup>2</sup>, which is the second largest in Africa. As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), Seychelles economy is dependent on the sea and relies on the ocean and marine resources as a means of achieving economic and social development.

Fisheries and sea based tourism are the first and second pillars of the economy respectively (Domingue, Payet and Shah 2001). According to data from 2005, “the fisheries sector contributes between 15 and 20 percent of national GDP”, the large share coming from industrial fishery and the processing of fish. In the last decade, around 30% of the country’s GDP has come from fisheries and the processing of fish (Martin 2011:18), and approximately 55% from tourism (World Travel & Tourism Council 2015:1). Consumable fish and fish products also account for around 95% of Seychelles' merchandise exports (Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA) 2013). About 10% are formally employed in fisheries, with the Indian Ocean Tuna (IOT) cannery alone providing 2,500 jobs (SFA 2013). Roughly 10,500 people (22.9% of total employment) are directly employed in the tourism sector (World Travel & Tourism Council 2015). The sea also provides a vital source of nutrition for the population. Fish is the primary source of protein, with on average of 9-12 meals containing fish consumed per person per week (Strain 2014:181). Given the small land mass, the countries agricultural capacities are limited, making it dependent on the import of food, including vegetables. About 70% of the countries food is imported (Seychelles News Agency 2014).

Due to its reliance on the exploitation of ocean resources, and its position in the middle of the Western Indian Ocean, with the shores of continental Africa about 1,300km from the main island Mahe, maritime security is a top national security priority and the ocean is at the heart of its economic development.

As will be explored in more detail, piracy off the coast of Somalia has been understood as an immediate national security priority with piracy activity threatening the supply lines of the country and having adverse impact on the two core economic sectors of the country. As a governmental publication argued in 2014: “Piracy has been a major issue affecting the performance and effectiveness of Seychelles’ Blue Economy and a major brake on the islands’ future prosperity” (Government of Seychelles, Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014:35). In consequence, Seychelles has in the last decade been at the forefront of the fight against piracy in the western Indian Ocean. With the rise of Somali piracy from 2005, Seychelles, on the one side, deployed resources including its defence forces and coast guard, and also became one of the main states prosecuting piracy suspects (Larsen 2015). On the other side, the country also became one of the main recipients of external capacity building to improve its judicial sector, seagoing law enforcement capabilities as well as maritime domain awareness capacity in order to deal with piracy.

In addition to piracy, two other maritime security issues are recognized in the country as significant threats, that is illegal fishing and the trafficking of narcotics at sea, both presenting a threat to the economic development of the country. The ambitions of the government in tackling such forms of maritime crime areas are high, it is to “transitioning from being the Indian Ocean hub for counter-piracy operations and prosecutions to becoming a hub for maritime security and transnational crime fighting coordination in the region, contributing to the protection of the maritime domain” (Government of Seychelles, Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014:66).

In the past decade, the Seychelles government also has proactively aimed at identifying innovative and sustainable solutions for the exploitation of ocean resources. The government under the leadership of the then president James Michel became a leading voice in developing the concept of blue economy as a new way of thinking about the economic potential of the sea in a sustainable manner. The concept aims to enhance marine-based economic development to bring about improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities (Seychelles Blue Economy Roadmap, 2014). The government did not only advocate for the concept on a regional and global level, but also used the blue economy as a guideline for coordinating governmental activities.

In 2015 Seychelles created the Blue Economy Department within the Ministry of Finance, Trade and the Blue Economy, with its primary role to coordinate and facilitate the synchronization between existing sectors, institutions and industries relevant to the Blue Economy. The Department launched a National Blue Economy Roadmap and a major marine spatial planning initiative to better coordinate the use of the countries EEZ and territorial waters was initiated in 2014. If both initiatives are primarily economic and environmental policies, they also entail a significant security component. One of the expected results of the blue economy strategy is, for instance, “greater protection for Seychelles ocean space and resources through better coordination across different sectors, application of protective measures and greater use of surveillance and enforcement tools” (Government of Seychelles, Blue Economy Department 2014:5).

## THE ORGANIZATION OF MARITIME SPACE

Seychelles only has 455 km<sup>2</sup> of land mass but an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 1.4 million km<sup>2</sup>. The combined coastline is approximately 600 km long, and the oceanic shelf totals 43,000 km<sup>2</sup> (Domingue, Payet and Shah, 2001). The country's main port is the Port of Victoria and it is in the north-eastern part of Mahe, which is the main island of the archipelago. Port Victoria is the main imports and exports hub of the Seychelles, and is recognised as a major industrial fishing, cruise and super yacht port in the south-western Indian Ocean. The Maritime Zones Act 1999 states that the archipelagic waters of Seychelles comprise those waters enclosed by the archipelagic baselines. Under the Act, Seychelles has declared a territorial sea of 12 nautical miles, a contiguous zone of 24 nautical miles and an EEZ of 200 nautical miles (Government of the Seychelles 1999).

The breadth of each of these zones is measured from the archipelagic baselines. The outer limits of Seychelles' EEZ and continental shelf are set out in the Maritime Zones (Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf) Order, 2008. Seychelles shares maritime boundaries with Tanzania, Reunion and Mauritius. Seychelles has signed bilateral treaties with France to agree on the delimitation of its south-western boundary with the island of Reunion and with Tanzania (UN 2001). Also, it has signed agreements with Mauritius to agree on the delimitation of its southern eastern boundaries. There are no maritime boundary disputes or tensions that exist between Seychelles and neighbouring states in the region. In fact, Seychelles and Mauritius have a bilateral treaty for the joint management of the continental shelf of the Mascarene Plateau Region, giving both countries joint jurisdiction over an additional area of 396,000 km<sup>2</sup> (UN 2012). This raises the question of the possibility that Seychelles and Mauritius may have to work in closely in implementing any maritime security capacity building project in the region.

The Seychelles government policy is one of preservation, conservation and enhancement of areas deemed to have great cultural, historical, aesthetical and biological value (Domingue, Payet and Shah, 2001). In this regard, the archipelago already has fourteen marine spaces that have been labelled as Marine Protected Areas (MPA). These MPAs have different intents and purposes, and in many cases, they are managed by different entities. In Seychelles, there are at least five different types of MPA's namely; Marine National parks, Shell (Mollusk) reserves, Special reserves, Protected areas and Strict natural reserves. Furthermore, in accordance with its Blue economy national strategy, Seychelles has committed up to 30% marine protection in its EEZ (400,000 km<sup>2</sup>) through an ongoing comprehensive Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) initiative whose first phase is expected to be completed in 2017.

In terms of areas allocated to fossil fuels and renewable energy extraction, the Seychelles opened its first wind farm back in 2013, which consists of eight wind turbines spread across two small islands located off the coast of Mahe. The farm produces about 7 gigawatt-hours annually, which currently amounts to 2% of the Seychelles power consumption (Masdar Clean Energy 2017). Oil exploration in Seychelles waters has also been undertaken by several oil companies at different intervals in the last few years, but no oil deposits have been discovered yet (Petro Seychelles 2017). It remains to be seen whether the energy extraction zones will effectively be integrated in the marine spatial plan currently being proposed for the Seychelles EEZ.

There are currently no zones/areas reserved exclusively for fishing within the Seychelles EEZ. There are however, several zones where Industrial Long line fishing and Purse Seining are prohibited, as set out under Section 27, Schedule 1 of the Seychelles Fisheries Act 1987. Furthermore, there are no designated naval patrol zones in the EEZ, but aerial and maritime patrols within the waters of Seychelles are coordinated by the Seychelles Fishing Authority, Seychelles Coast guard, Seychelles Air force and National Drug Enforcement Agency. These organizations have differing objectives but combine to play significant roles in ensuring the maritime security of the Seychelles EEZ. However, more needs to be done to improve the level of cooperation between these parties as well as the efficiency with which they mobilise to deal with maritime threats in Seychelles waters. Understanding the issues faced by the above organizations will go a long way towards understanding the capacity building requirements of the country and as such the work of these organizations will be considered in more detail in the Seychelles case study by SAFE FSEAS.

## CONCLUSION

As illustrated here, maritime security is extremely important for a SIDS such as the Seychelles. It is affected by localised issues, such as sustainable development and the protection of biodiversity, but also by wider maritime insecurity in the Western Indian Ocean, such the threat of Somali based piracy, evidenced by its leading role in the establishment of the REFLECS3 centre.

The next section of this case study will explore the remaining elements of the SPIP mapping process, which will focus on problems, institutions and projects. This section will identify specific maritime security problems highlighted by the government of the Seychelles within the spaces discussed here, such as the MPA's, as well as maritime security issues of the state that do not feature as political priorities. The case study will then outline the actors and institutions that are part of the responses followed by an exploration of the maritime security capacity building projects that have been initiated.

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