OVERVIEW

The Venice Regional Seapower Symposium (RSS), conducted in Venice by the Italian Navy since 1996, has progressively enlarged its perspective achieving a full and mature regional dimension with a global perspective thus becoming a landmark event in terms of maritime topics in the Mediterranean region and beyond.

The purpose of this leading maritime forum is to create an opportunity for the Chiefs of the Navies operating in the Wider Mediterranean region, as well as for senior representatives from International Organizations and Agencies with a key role in the maritime dimension, to meet and discuss about their common challenges, strengthening mutual cooperation and understanding, along with the capability to make concrete steps ahead in supporting the present and future roles of Navies and thwart the so called “sea-blindness”.

The Mediterranean region, a bridge between three continents, where different religions, cultures, economies and societies live together since centuries, is no longer experiencing stability and peace. It has become once more a risk area, characterized by security issues encompassing: terrorism, massive migration, illegitimate “territorialisation” of the high seas, merciless overfishing, intentional and accidental pollution, maritime degradation, problems that originate also beyond his boundaries to a planetary level.

In this light, we have the awareness to operate in a security continuum, which stretches from the coastlines of our own Lands, to the high seas, until the littorals of third Countries, where conventional and non-conventional threats coexist. An important tool of this continuum are indeed the Virtual Regional Maritime Traffic Centre (V-RMTC) and its trans-regional evolution, the Trans Regional Maritime Network (T-RMN). The signature of the “Note of Accession” to our community by the Nigerian Navy testifies the achievements of such concrete and effective solutions and it gives a new and important pulse to the international cooperation amongst Navies.
The 2015 edition scored the significant attendance of 38 Navies, 26 present at CNO/CNS level, and 7 International Organizations, both military and civilian, which gathered with cooperative attitude to share experiences and innovative ideas on proposed discussion items.

2015 Edition’s topics were summarized in the Symposium’s theme “Enhancing Maritime Security in the Wider Mediterranean”.

As mentioned by the Admiral De Giorgi, Chief of the Italian Navy and landlord of the event, the long-lasting middle east crisis, the unsolved problems coming from the Arabs Springs, the evolution of the international terrorism, the climate changes issue and a massive migration flow of people fleeing from war zone and poverty are seriously endangering the security and the welfare of the countries around the Mediterranean area and his approaches.

In this perspective, today even more than in the past, Navies are called upon to protect the States’ sovereignty and the citizens’ security, promote global peace, secure economic interests, prevent crises, grant the rule of law, the freedom of navigation in the High Seas and reassure citizens living permanently abroad. To understand how to ensure these tasks, in terms of technical capabilities of the fleet and improving the international relations and cooperation, is key factor and strategic enabler to effectively foster maritime security beyond national boundaries and regional areas.

Based on this preamble, discussions have been revolved around two different Sessions which analyzed the main themes under different perspectives.

The First Session, which explained the threats in the maritime environment and the new roles of the Navies, has been chaired by the Chief of the Spanish Navy, Almirante Jaime MUÑOZ DELGADO Y DIAZ DEL RIO.

The following discussions highlighted many interesting points. Navies are called upon to grant the broader action of the State at sea. To this regard, while the number of organizations involved in Maritime Security is significant and the borders between competencies of different agencies are blurred, a more comprehensive and coordinated approach is therefore needed.

To become key enablers of Nations’ maritime prosperity, as well as Maritime Security, Navies should encompass the

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1 Speakers included: Admiral Bulent BOSTANOĞLU – Commander of the Turkish Naval Forces; Admiral Luis Manuel FOURNEAUX MACIEIRA FRAGOSO – Chief of the Portuguese Naval Staff; Vice Admiral Aluf Ram RUTBERG – Commander in Chief of Israeli Navy; Rear Admiral M’Barek DAKHNI – Deputy of the Royal Moroccan Navy Inspector; Admiral John RICHARDSON – Chief of Naval Operations of the US NAVY; Dr. Alberto MAESTRINI – FINCANTIERI, Head, Naval Vessels Business Unit; Mr Hubert GAMBS - European Commission, DG MARE Director in charge of Mediterranean and Black Sea.
full spectrum of actions relevant to the security of the seas and to the war fighting capabilities. This requires more adaptable platforms and well-prepared crews.

Going to the specific item, the outcomes of this session can be summarized as follows:

**Facing the whole spectrum of maritime challenges**

Security challenges at sea in the Mediterranean area follow an increasing trend therefore Navies are required to provide a comprehensive and effective array of responses to a wide span of challenges. Navies need to keep active the whole spectrum of traditional tasks since they could be called, at any time and with short notice, to perform military tasks as well as to implement the State Action at Sea in order to face also the emerging threats which affect not only the coastal countries.

Moreover, Maritime Security, especially in terms of securing the freedom of the international maritime trade and supply routes, is vital towards the undisrupted functioning of global markets and industry. The significance of maritime routes to the globalized economic system has encouraged, and will continue to do, an array of state and non-state actors to take advantage of the inherent vulnerability of maritime routes on the High Seas in order to promote their interests.

This also requires to manage an extremely big amount of data, with particular focus on the achievement of a comprehensive Maritime Situational Awareness. It implies a strong interconnection between cyber and maritime domain, which add layers of complexity to existing tactics and operations requiring the capability to counter those cyber threats hampering our missions.

In this perspective, the core capabilities navies need to ensure as a military force are used, simultaneously, to enable and/or support activities/missions not military related. The desired outcome is to have credible, effective, well-balanced and adaptive Navies, which are the cost effective solution to face the whole spectrum of maritime challenges, ranging from the high-end to the low-end.

**The implementation of the State Action at Sea**

Based on those assumptions, Navies are called to be the key leaders of the state action at sea since the spectrum of their tasks is growing dramatically.

To allow naval forces to execute all missions with proficiency in a changing environment with new threats and challenges appearing on a daily basis, it is necessary to allocate sufficient resources, to enhance coordination with national maritime agencies and to include all actors acting in the maritime cluster. However, Navies must remain very careful and selective when employing naval forces in concert with other non-military elements because new peace time missions demand legal baseline and new sets of rules.
Consequently, the development of synergies between military, law enforcement and civilian institutions at all levels is a one way road for the achievement of a complete Maritime Security.

Moreover, Navies are called to train and educate their crews to face new challenges, to think to innovative tasks to the traditional tools and to build new platforms considering all the possible operational requirements since the initial project phase.

The second session, chaired by Rear Admiral Predrag STIPANOVIC, Commander of the Croatian Navy, focused on the challenges, and the opportunities as well, for the Navies arising from the Dialogue and the Cooperation.

During this session the speakers agreed that through comprehensive approach, dialogue, trust and corresponding responsibilities the Navies can protect their vulnerabilities and enhance performances for the benefits of all. Navies are always investigating potential future challenges including the development of the response options. Thus, it is important to consult each other and the International Organizations, to contribute to the development of international regulations and norms in the Maritime Domain.

The inherent ability of the Navies to exploit existing transnational dialogue and cooperation at sea through a proactive approach is an enabling ability in sustainment of a stable environment, available to the political decision makers as a long-term preventive measure. Therefore, multilateral approach and cross organizations’ cooperation are essential elements to achieve success.

The outcomes of the second session can be summarized as follows:

**Dialogue & Cooperation**

It is evident that the security of the maritime domain calls for a coordinated, cross-sectorial and multinational cooperation among relevant regional and international actors and partners acting in the maritime domain.

Based on this statement, Dialogue and Cooperation are crucial to develop confidence and mutual trust among Nations to face this challenge. Without them, we may be overwhelmed by the emerging security challenges in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) Region which would definitely have a negative impact on the internal stability of all countries in the vicinity.

More importantly, navies can contribute directly to build up this strategic trust and to foster habits of cooperation so as to buttress regional peace and stability.

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2 Presentations were made by Vice Admiral Georgios GIAKOUMAKIS – Chief of the Hellenic Navy General Staff; Admiral Bernard ROGEL – Chief of Staff of the French Navy; Rear Admiral Nazih JBAILY – Chief of Lebanese Naval Forces; Rear Admiral Lai CHUNG HAN – Chief of Singaporean Navy; Rear Admiral Waldemar GLUSZKO – Deputy Director General of the EU Military Staff; Vice Admiral Clive JOHNSTONE – Commander Maritime Command at NATO Headquarters.
The perfect environment to pursue these goals are the regional initiatives, mostly lead by the Navies, which play a fundamental role as force multiplier and to prevent and de-conflict overlapping and waste of resources.

The signature of two Technical Arrangement within the “Adriatic and Ionian Initiative” (ADRION) on the “Maritime Security” and on the implementation of an “On-call Maritime Force”, just completed during the timeframe of this Symposium, testify both the proactive attitude of the Navies and the concrete achievements of regional initiatives.

**The Navies’ role**

The Maritime Security domain, with the single naval units having a high degree of autonomy, is an operational environment that offers a wider range of opportunities in the field of partnerships, opening ways of cooperation that were not foreseen before, as it is, for instance, in the framework of the antipiracy effort of the international community.

Ultimately, the Navies continuously have to commit determination and positive spirit in developing a progressive ability to operate together, moving ahead, step by step, and always promoting valuable initiatives in the cooperation field.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The 2015 Venice RSS confirmed the common understanding about the central role of Navies and Maritime Services for the achievement of Maritime Security through: the Cooperation amongst Navies, the Dialogue with key regional leaders and International Organizations, the full implementation of the State at sea thanks to an adequate legal framework and using a balanced and flexible naval power able to cope with the full spectrum of maritime challenges.

Moreover, as mentioned by Admiral De Giorgi in his closing remarks, it is mandatory for the Navies of the Wider Mediterranean to increase their efforts to enhance their interoperability in order to be able to perform traditional tasks, such as Anti-submarine or Anti-air warfare, up to the highest standards.

The quality and the number of participants, together with the high level of agreed findings and shared thoughts, views and experiences, represents the best figure to acknowledge the attention raised by the discussion topics of this tenth edition.

In addition, the simple but significant ceremony which formalized the access of Nigeria in the V-RMTC and the T-RMN, extending the community to one of the most pivotal areas of the world, represented a notable achievement in terms of comprehensive approach and clearly demonstrated the successful way of Dialogue & Cooperation.

During the discussions several significant findings emerged.
Navies are challenged by the need to handle wide and diverse spectrum of actions in order to cope with a plethora of threats.

As it was well pointed out during the discussions, Navies should be on the lead of any maritime operation in the high seas thanks to their Command and Control capabilities, the ability to gain a comprehensive maritime situational awareness, the entitlement to enforce international maritime law and a proper mind-set to optimize the use of resources, avoiding duplication of efforts.

Furthermore, the Navies’ assigned mission to sustain safe and secure maritime environment are requiring projection of influence over the area of responsibility. Thus, Navies are called to look for feasible solutions that include a comprehensive approach, coordination with the military, governmental and non-governmental actors, dialogue with regional key leaders and International Organizations.

Therefore, Navies have to keep the momentum and further promote international maritime cooperation to improve their effectiveness.

Upon conclusion of the 10th edition of the Venice Regional Seapower Symposium, gathered Navies achieved a substantial agreement on several topics which have been summarized in a Final Recommendations document, attached to this Executive Summary, that can represent an useful tool to leverage on the important role of Navies, both at national and international level.