

Africa's 2050 secure territorial-waters target may be unattainable

According to AllAfrica.com, the African Union's (AU's) deadline for securing the continent's territorial waters - the world's last major geographical region without a maritime strategy - has been set at 2050. This target, however, may prove unattainable.

Without a comprehensive strategy to police, patrol and promote the maritime economy and resources along its 42,000km coastline, Africa loses billions of dollars in revenue annually and leaves itself vulnerable to criminal activities.

Annette Leijenaar, Head of the Conflict Management and Peace-building Division at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), a Pretoria-based think tank, said in a recent policy brief that "Africa remains the continent that suffers most from illegal and unregulated fishing, maritime terrorism, piracy and armed robbery at sea, poor legal and regulatory maritime regimes, illegal drugs, arms and human trafficking, a lack of effective communication and other technological maritime requirements, and last but not least," Leijenaar warned, "unsuitable ships and ports."

AllAfrica.com reports that a meeting on the Africa Integrated Maritime (AIM) strategy was held earlier this month in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, and the AU is also set to address management of riverine systems, dams and wetlands. Leijenaar said that this is a step in the right direction, "however," she noted, "action is required through implementable plans that are well coordinated and have the political commitment of African leaders."

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