The United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has scored Nigeria high on efforts and collaborations to tackle maritime insecurity and smuggling of hard drugs in the Gulf of Guinea. UNODC also applauded Nigeria for enacting a distinct antipiracy law to broadly confront the problem of piracy and crimes on the country’s territorial waters and exclusive economic zone. The representative of the UNODC Country Director for Nigeria, Mr. Oliver Stolpe, stated these during a press conference on Tuesday in Abuja on the second day of the ongoing Global Maritime Security Conference.

At a separate press briefing, Chairman, Ship Owners Forum, Mrs. Margaret Orakwusi, bemoaned the issue of illegal fishing on Nigerian waters, saying appropriate measures must be applied to stop this for the interest of the shipping industry.

The Suppression of Piracy and other Maritime Offences Act 2019 was enacted on June 24, 2019 after an assent by President Muhammadu Buhari, making Nigeria the first country in West and Central Africa to have a standalone anti-piracy law. The Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) facilitated the drafting of the Suppression of Piracy and other Maritime Offences Bill in 2012, in collaboration with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).

Stolpe stated, “We need to recognise the things that have been done right, that is the Suppression of Piracy Act that was passed by the Nigerian government, which for the first time gives a comprehensive framework to tackle the issue of piracy and, more broadly, maritime crimes. We are on a good path. We need to recognise the things that have been done right, that is the Suppression of Piracy Act that was passed by the Nigerian government, which for the first time gives a comprehensive framework to tackle the issue of piracy and, more broadly, maritime crimes. We are on a good path. There are regional and international frameworks in place, gaps existed in terms of the countries signing on to the conventions and actually putting them into domestic legislations and policies. He said the Gulf of Guinea was also targeted for trafficking in hard drugs, especially cocaine, by sea, with huge.

Orakwusi, in her own briefing, welcomed the current efforts to regulate fishing on the country’s waters, but said more needed to be done, especially to control the movement of the proceeds of illegal fishing. “We should also watch what the financial institutions are doing, how monies are transferred from one country to another – proceeds of the crime of illegal fishing – and again monitor the markets,” she said. “Where are they selling these products? One good thing with ocean resources, a prawn can tell its own story, where is it caught. It is just a little analysis and you will get all the information. So that, to me, is an effective way of monitoring illegal fishing,” she added.