

Conference
*Addressing the Resurgence of Sea Piracy:
Legal, Political and Security Aspects*
16th June 2009, Rome

INTRODUCTORY SPEECHES

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- The acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea have increased dramatically worldwide since 2006. The number of pirates' attacks grew by 11% in 2008 and reached almost 100% in the first 3 months of 2009. Last year pirates made 111 attacks hijacking more than 40 ships off the Somali coast. Ransoms are estimated between 30 and 80 millions in 2008.

- According to the International Maritime Organization, currently pirates detain in Somalia more than 18 ships and around 300 crews. Due to weather conditions, pirates increase their attacks mainly in spring and autumn. Lately, however, pirates showed a growing capacity, threatening ships as far as 700 miles from the Somali coast, also at night, responding to the international military presence in the Gulf of Aden with a surge of attacks in the Somali Basin.

- The expansion of pirates' activity along vital sea lines, between Europe and South and East Asia through the Suez Canal, and the risk of rising tension in the volatile Somali coastal zones, triggered the concern of the international community for maritime security in the Gulf of Aden and in the vast sea area between Somalia and The Seychelles. Therefore, combating piracy and armed robbery off the Somali coasts became a major goal for multilateral cooperation.

- On December 16, 2008 the Security Council passed Resolution 1851 encouraging member states to coordinate their efforts even through the establishment of a contact group. Italy, at the time still one of the ten elected members of the Security Council, supported the need for a coordinated effort and on January 14, 2009 met together with more than 30 countries, the United Nation, the European Union, the African Union, NATO, the Arab League and the International Maritime

Organization to create the International Contact Group on Piracy off the Somali Coasts advocated by the Security Council.

- The Contact Group (CG) is the main multilateral forum for coordinating international efforts to deter, prevent and suppress piracy in the Horn of Africa, to cooperate with the shipping industry and to assist Somalia and the other countries in the region in building national capacity to fight piracy.
- Military units of 25 countries are currently patrolling the sea area off the Somali coasts. The presence in the area of three multilateral operations, EU NAVFOR, NATO and the Combined Maritime Force – Task Force 151, together with navies answering to respective individual national authorities (China, Russia, India, Japan, Malaysia, Iran) is a sign of the extended international commitment to fight piracy. Tactical coordination for an efficient positioning of warships in the Gulf of Aden has been conducted in Bahrain among the 3 multinational missions and some other navies through an open-ended informal unit denominated Shared Awareness and De-confliction (SHADE).
- Italy is committed to actively participate in the Contact Group and its 4 working group.
- After commanding the first NATO mission in the area, between October and December 2008, units of the Italian Navy participate within Operation Atalanta. Despite the positive results of the international efforts, piracy off the coast of Somalia seems likely to remain a serious threat beyond the EU mission end date of 13 December 2009. Therefore, yesterday the General Affairs Council, while acknowledging the ability demonstrated by EU NAVFOR, agreed to extend for one year Operation Atalanta. Last week NATO agreed to extend its own presence in the region, initially limited to the end of June 2009.
- The important and unprecedented military measures adopted by the international community to deter and suppress piracy in the Somali Basin do not limit the scope of the international effort.
- Following the recommendations advocated by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), shipping companies have been

encouraged to adopt a set of specific and experimented safety measures to prevent or make difficult successful attacks by the pirates. The large majority of the shipping companies are reported to have effectively adopted these suggested best practices, which do not include, however, armed security on board of merchant vessels. Indeed, the shipping industry and several members of the Contact Group hold reservation on the use of vessel protect detachments (VPD).

- Contact Group's member states are committed to disseminate agreed anti-piracy guidelines among the shipping industry. Bahamas, Liberia, The Marshall Island and Panama, all important flag states, have recently signed a joint declaration on this issue. Italy supports this policy as well as the IMO action to improve the safety of merchant vessels.
- The international community supports the coastal states in the region. Somalia, Kenya, Djibouti, Tanzania and Yemen need capacity building to contain and suppress piracy. On June 9 and 10 in Seoul an important High Level Meeting focussed on the international effort to provide technical assistance aimed at improving maritime security in the region of the Horn of Africa.
- Italy, in particular, supports capacity building in Yemen, enhancing specific capabilities through a €20m project to establish a national network for maritime traffic control (VTS System).
- Furthermore, the Contact Group on piracy is playing a significant role in strengthening international cooperation to facilitate arrest, detention and prosecution of suspected pirates. A specific working group has been tasked to highlight steps that states might take to ensure that they are able to arrest and prosecute pirates.
- In several cases, the capacity to contribute to suppressing piracy through legal mechanisms requires harmonization of legal systems and the adoption of specific judicial measures to enhance prosecution.
- The Contact Group met in New York on May 29 and decided to establish an international trust fund, managed by the United Nations, to defray the expenses associated with the prosecution of suspected pirates, and those generally related to implementing Contact group objectives to combat piracy in all its aspects.

- Today, on these very important issues, the discussion on “Resurgence of Piracy” will certainly contribute to the current debate that the international community enhanced so far to contain and eliminate the common burden of piracy from the Gulf of Aden and the Somali Basin.