

Security and Defence Committee, 17 March 2015

Topic: Piracy in Africa. Intervention by: Dr Marcus Houben, CMPD/EEAS

Mister/Madam Chair,
Honorable Members of the European Parliament,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Thank you very much for inviting me to speak at this session of your Committee on piracy in Africa. In my intervention I would like to provide you with some information, not on piracy in Africa itself, **but on the organization and coordination of the international response to piracy** and more in particular on the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia and the EU Presidency of the CGPCS since January 2014.

The Contact Group on Piracy (CGPCS)

2. The Contact Group on Piracy of the Coast of Somalia brings together all stakeholders, public and private, civil and military that are affected by Somali based piracy. **It is a unique and inclusive construct that represents a new international governance model for truly comprehensive approaches to complex problems.**

3. The Contact Group has continuously been in operation since 2009 and has been instrumental to achieve some very concrete and positive results. This is made possible by the fact, to quote the former CGPCS Chairperson "that *everyone* hates pirates". No other international security challenge generates such unanimity of opinion. The Contact Group deliberately adopted an unusually open architecture. It welcomes responsible and productive actors who are willing and able to contribute to solutions to piracy, including national governments, international and regional organizations, and non-governmental organizations including various sectors of the maritime industry and the private sector.

4. The Contact Group is unique in the sense that there is no formal structure, no rigid protocol, no standing infrastructure and institutional overhead. The CGPCS has no budget, no secretariat and no formal rules. As a transient, issue-focused, political-level voluntary coordination body, the CGPCS maintains a very specific, limited focus on maritime piracy off Somalia, which allows political cooperation among very diverse actors, many of whom would not normally or formally interact with each other absent such a compelling mutual interest. The Contact Group works with the UN but is not of the UN.

5. The Contact Group delivers. It has been instrumental ending the impunity of piracy in the Indian Ocean by orchestrating and coordinating the legal chain that now allows Atalanta ships to apprehend piracy suspects, transfer them to for example Seychelles, and once tried and found guilty, repatriate the convicted pirate to Somalia. The CGPCS has been instrumental in the coordination of voluntary naval operations in the Indian Ocean, not only among the established naval operations but also of the activities of the so-called independent deployers.

6. The CGPCS has been instrumental in establishing constructive cooperative relations with the maritime industry and facilitated the flow of information to enable the prosecution of pirate organizers and financiers. Finally, the CGPCS contributed to public diplomacy and general awareness among vulnerable youth in Somalia to stay away from pirate activities.

7. It is fair to conclude that the Contact Group has earned political legitimacy because it delivers, without any real structural formality. It works because it is based on mutual interest and trust. Working together overtime created understanding and synergy. The UN and UNODC in particular is in this regard a key partner. I am very glad to have the opportunity here to thank and pay tribute to mr. Alan Cole from UNODC for his personal involvement and exemplary collaboration we have enjoyed in the Indian Ocean in the common fight against Somali piracy.

The EU Chairmanship of the CGPCS

8. The European Union was present at the creation of the Contact Group. Its participation in the CGPCS has followed a remarkable trajectory: the EU started as an observer to the Contact Group and was, four years later, invited by CGPCS stakeholders to take the Chair as of January 2014. Mr. Maciej Popowski, Deputy Secretary General of the EEAS has been appointed as the EU Chair of the CGPCS. The EU Chairmanship has been a joint effort of EEAS, European Commission (and in particular I would like to mention DG Move and DG Devco), EU ISS, EU OPCEN, the EU Delegation in New York, EUNAVFOR Operation Atalanta and EUCAP Nestor. We have worked on the basic principle of 'One EU'. It is the European Union chairing the CGPCS, not the Commission or the EEAS. I salute the support we have received from EU colleagues in many different places around the world.

9. The EU chairmanship of the CGPCS set ambitious goals for the Contact Group: (1) 'zero/zero': zero ships and zero seafarers in the hands of Somali pirates; (2) the reform and refinement of the structures of the CGPCS making it more relevant, cost-effective and demand driven; (3) documenting the lessons learned of the CGPCS, documenting what we did, how we did it and analysing why it worked.

10. The EU is well under way to deliver almost entirely on its Presidency objectives. Currently there are zero vessels in the hands of pirates (down from 60 vessels in 2011) and the number of seafarers still held captive has dropped from 732 seafarers held captive in 2011 to 26 in March 2015. The last group of four seafarers were released only a month ago, after enduring a horrible ordeal for almost five years in captivity. The EU Chair, Mr. Popowski, has saluted their resilience, steadfastness and moral strength and has called for the immediate release of the 26 remaining hostages. In October 2014 the CGPCS established a so-called "Piracy Survivor Family Fund" to provide for medical and social support to seafarers and their families after their release.

11. The EU Presidency was keen to make the CGPCS more demand-driven, delivery-focused and cost-effective. The number of WGs has been reduced from five to three and a Legal Forum of the CGPCS was established – co-chaired by Portugal and Mauritius. Co-chair arrangements have been introduced allowing states in the region to take ownership, not only of the problem but more importantly, of the solution. An active role is currently played by the Indian Ocean Commission, Japan, Mauritius, Seychelles and the United Arab Emirates.

12. The EU made it a priority to document the lessons learned from the Contact Group to make these available for scholars, practitioners and politicians for possible use in other policy fields and for other complex and international problems. A CGPCS "Lessons Learned Consortium" was established, coordinated by researchers from Cardiff University. The Lessons Learned Consortium has now completed the first stage of analysis of the CGPCS. In particular I would like to signal to Committee members a publication that was prepared under supervision of the EU ISS, which documents the genesis and development of the Contact Group.

13. Finally a few remarks on a thorny issue, namely the scope of the so-called High Risk Area (HRA) that is declared in the Indian Ocean. On the one hand, a group of countries composed by Egypt, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Djibouti are seeking a revision of the scope of HRA. On the other hand the private sector is in favour of maintaining the current configuration of the HRA. Stakeholders expressed the wish to identify a shared, common, way forward. While it is evident that the decision to change or revoke the HRA procedurally rests with industry, it is acknowledged that interested, non-industry stakeholders should be consulted when reviewing the scope of the HRA. The EU Chair facilitated a follow-up meeting on this issue last Friday in Brussels. We are quite confident that a solution to this issue will be found within the context of the CGPCS in the near future.

Concluding remarks: sustaining the achievements of the CGPCS stakeholders

14. Ladies and Gentlemen, in the last few minutes I have extolled the virtues of the Contact Group on Piracy. It is a governance and crisis-response model that deserves further study and exposure.

15. I believe that the EU's chairmanship of the Contact Group is both significant and important. It is not only the first time that an organization, rather than a national government, chairs the Contact Group but more importantly, the Contact Group, as a multi-stakeholder governance model for complex international problems, offers a context and environment that fits the EU surprisingly well.

16. The Contact Group allowed the EU to take international responsibility and show leadership by facilitating the coordination of a great and very diverse group of stakeholders. The explanation for this is that the character of the EU itself is a testimony to the importance of multilateralism. It is coded in our DNA that the combined effect of 28 EU Member States is far greater than the sum of individual Member States' efforts can be, just as the combined efforts of the 80-odd participants in the Contact Group is very much greater than their individual efforts could possibly have been in this fight against piracy in Africa.

Thank you

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