



## PRESS RELEASE

### Contact Group: Global Approach to combat maritime piracy and thoughts on underpinning this International Forum.

The Contact Group on Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) held its 21<sup>st</sup> plenary session in Nairobi from July 11 – 13. Organised by the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), Chair of the CGPCS, and in collaboration with the Republic of Kenya and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), this plenary session brought together more than 200 participants from approximately fifty States and organizations. This plenary session reiterated the commitment of the region and that of the international community to continuously combat piracy and its root causes.

The 21<sup>st</sup> plenary session of the CGPCS chaired by Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mauritius and Chair of IOC, was an opportunity to assess the status of maritime piracy in the Western Indian Ocean. In 2017, the cost of piracy in the Western Indian Ocean was estimated at 1.4 billion dollars according to the latest figures from *Oceans Beyond Piracy of One Earth Foundation*.

Representatives of EU NAVFOR and Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) identified rare cases of piracy since the resurgence of attacks at the beginning of 2017 – namely two attacks in November 2017, whereby the alleged perpetrators are awaiting trial in Seychelles and one attack at the beginning of this year. "*We must not ease our efforts,*" stressed the Chairperson of CGPCS, Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo, as in the same timeframe, observations from EU NAVFOR / CMF reported an overall surge in maritime incidents. Members of the Contact Group shared this view, and the European Union also indicated its decision to extend the mandate of the EU NAVFOR Atalanta mission until December 2020. Furthermore, the participants of the plenary session stressed on the importance of halting the threat of piracy as a whole.

In the same line, the Cabinet Secretary Defence of Kenya, Raychelle Omamo, observed: "*We must fight these ills – piracy and terrorism – in tandem because in many ways terrorism extends into the waters through piracy and piracy extends to land through terrorism.*" Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo also declared: "*we cannot fight effectively nor permanently remove piracy, if we do not tackle all the crimes and threats that feed on piracy or are fuelled by piracy. That is why I suggested that we start thinking about the possible extension of the mandate of the Contact Group and that the outcomes be submitted to the next plenary session for debate.*" Participants of the plenary thus agreed with the Chair's proposal to reflect on the future of the Contact Group, aiming, to confer to it, a more pro-active role and a broader mandate enclosing all crimes and threats directly related to piracy.

Members of CGPCS have confirmed the usefulness of this forum which allows to exchange on on-going initiatives and offers a comprehensive outlook on the activities of the fight against piracy. For instance, some initiatives are closely linked namely the Djibouti Code of Conduct and the MASE programme implemented by regional organizations in Eastern and Southern Africa (IGAD, COMESA EAC, IOC) under European Union funding.

Maritime security is emerging as a key issue of development in Eastern and Southern Africa. "*Maritime security is becoming a very important foundation for strategies to create the blue*



economy as new pillar of prosperity for coastal communities and for improving their livelihoods," stated the Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Kenya, Monica Juma. The Secretary General of the IOC, Hamada Madi, confirmed: "the potential of the blue economy, its potential for growth and social progress, will emerge only if we are able to collectively provide, us, the States and organizations in the region, safety at sea with the support of our partners of the international community. The CGPCS is thus an expression of a common goal to cooperate not only for regional stability crucial for development in Eastern and Southern Africa, but also for the security of sea routes in the Indian Ocean among the most important for international trade."

The next plenary session of CGPCS will be held at the end of the first semester of 2019.

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- CGPCS Website, [click here](#)
- Report on Piracy status in Eastern Africa, [click here](#)
- Press release in French, [click here](#)

