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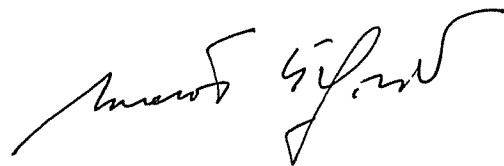
Dear Lord Roper,

Thank you for sending us the Report "Combating Somali Piracy: the EU's Naval Operation Atalanta".

I take this opportunity to thank the European Union Committee of the House of Lords once again for its continuous interest in this matter and its constructive contribution to the debate. The Commission will take this proposal forward and will carefully consider the view expressed by the Committee in this report.

In line with the Commission's decision to encourage National Parliaments to react to its proposals to improve the process of policy formulation, we welcome this opportunity to respond to your comments. I enclose the Commission's reply and hope you will find this a valuable contribution to your own deliberations.

Yours sincerely,



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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

COMMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON THE REPORT OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS "COMBATING SOMALI PIRACY: THE EU'S NAVAL OPERATION ATALANTA"

The European Commission agrees that piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean is an ongoing, serious issue that poses a threat to the international community. As such, this needs to be appropriately and properly addressed.

As the report points out, the rise in piracy off Somalia is due to a number of factors; the absence of effective Somali Government institutions, the lack of unified control over the State territory and the absence of rule of law. The EU has subsequently adopted a holistic approach towards Somalia by linking security and development issues as mutually reinforcing in an effort to support stability in Somalia and in the wider region.

As part of this approach, EUNAVFOR Operation ATALANTA is a military operation against piracy in the Gulf of Aden conducted in the framework of Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), where specific rules and procedures apply and where the capabilities are drawn from Member States' assets. Acting under the political control and strategic guidance of the Political and Security Committee of the Council of the European Union, EUNAVFOR has established and runs "The Maritime Security Centre Horn of Africa" (MSC-HOA) - a Coordination Centre tasked to safeguard merchant shipping operating in the region and especially to protect vulnerable ships when transiting the Gulf of Aden and also the waters off the coast of Somalia.

On 11 March this year, the European Commission adopted a Recommendation¹ addressed to EU Member States to ensure the effective application of measures for self-protection and for preventing acts of piracy and armed attacks against ships, including a reminder to register on the MSC-HOA's website (<http://www.mschoa.org>) before transiting the Gulf of Aden.

More broadly, the European Commission shares the comments made about the World Food Programme (WFP) expressed in the report of the House of Lords and sees the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) as the appropriate forum to raise these. The CGPCS has been established pursuant to UNSC resolution 1851(2008), and states in its operational paragraph No 4 that the UN Secretary-General had to submit a report on the long-term security of WFP maritime deliveries to Somalia. Working Group 1 of the CGPCS addressed the issue of WFP chartering better performing (and therefore less vulnerable) ships in its first meeting held on 24-25 February 2009 but this has not led to practical results so far.

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:067:0013:0026:EN:PDF>

To ensure the continuity of Operation ATALANTA's efforts, the European Commission is providing assistance to the judicial systems of Kenya and the Seychelles to cope with the extra demands associated with the prosecution and detention of piracy suspects. This support has been very effective in terms of strengthening the capacity of the prosecution, police, judicial and prison services.

With the long-term objective to jail and prosecute pirates in Somalia, the European Commission is also supporting activities that strengthen the rule of law and improve selected custodial facilities in Somalia. These efforts are part of the long-term commitment of the EU to bring peace and development to Somalia, including Somaliland, Puntland and the Central-South region.

The EU is the biggest single donor to Somalia in terms of development assistance, which is mainly provided through the European Development Fund (EDF). As part of the ongoing interventions in the field of governance and rule of law, the European Commission supports, politically and financially, Somali federal institutions, including the police, the Parliament and the Ministries, in order to boost the ability of the Somali institutions to draft and implement policies and laws. Throughout Somalia, including Somaliland and Puntland, the EU also helps to alleviate the plight of the Somali population through support to agriculture and rural development, support to economic growth and private sector development, education and vocational training, as well as support to local communities and non-governmental organisations with a special focus on support to women. In 2008 and 2009 a total of €117M were committed to fund the strengthening of these sectors.

In terms of promoting regional capacity building and in support of the International Maritime Organisation's Djibouti Code of Conduct, the Commission has adopted, under the Instrument for Stability, a support programme dealing with maritime security and safety along certain Critical Maritime Routes, including the Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Aden. This includes support to the regional documentation and training centre in Djibouti as well as a regional information sharing centre in Sana'a (Yemen). Maritime law enforcement and coast guards of coastal States (including where feasible Somalia itself) are the main focus of this capacity building action.

The European Commission also continues to address the humanitarian needs of the population of Somalia with a focus on health/nutrition, water, sanitation, food security activities, and support to internally displaced persons, victims of armed conflict and climatic hazards. Commission humanitarian aid in the period 2004-2009 amounts to about €138M. In 2008 and 2009 alone, the total allocation amounted, respectively, to €46M and €45M, and the current allocation for 2010 is €35M.

Finally the European Commission would like to express its appreciation for the support of its activities expressed in the report of the House of Lords and looks forward to continue to working in close cooperation with Member States to bring peace and development throughout Somalia and the region.