

PIRACY – ECSA-ETF JOINT STATEMENT April 2014

Shipowners and Seafarers' representatives call for continued efforts in combating piracy in East Africa & request the EU to liaise with regional States to ensure safe navigation in West Africa

The EU has shown leadership in counter-piracy missions and is in the strong position to be able to act promptly on different fronts such as: political, diplomatic, trade, development aid and with military involvement.

ECSA and ETF call on the EU and the Member States to continue the good work in East Africa and to come up with immediate action in West Africa. The EU should use the dialogue with African States to decide on joint concrete action to provide safe and secure trade links in West Africa.

East Africa

Since 2011, the number of Somali piracy attacks has steadily decreased, due to a combination of factors: EU and international naval units patrolling the wider area off the coast of Somalia and the Indian Ocean, the application of industry Best Management Practices that are designed to reduce a ship's vulnerability and the increased use of private armed guards and vessel protection detachments on board vessels.

However, the European Social Partners in Maritime Transport warn that the reduction of pirate attacks off the coast of Somalia should not be misinterpreted. Until a permanent solution is found on land, efforts by the shipping industry and the international community will only address the symptoms, rather than the root causes of piracy. The number of interventions by naval forces (86 by EUNAVFOR since May 2009 only to deter attacks) clearly shows that the work is not yet done.

ECSA and ETF therefore call upon the EU and other international actors to continue to resource naval units in the area and continue the efforts on land to address the root causes of these unlawful acts.

The announced – but yet to be officially confirmed – extension of the EUNAVFOR Atalanta operation is therefore very much welcomed. ECSA and ETF commend the EU for taking up the chairmanship of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia and fully subscribe to the target set by the EU of zero/zero: zero seafarers taken hostage / zero ships hijacked.

Through its CGPCS chairmanship the EU recognises that only through coordinated and continued international efforts and in close cooperation with the coastal States from the region, can a permanent solution be found.

ECSA and ETF furthermore appreciate the work undertaken by the European Commission and the European External Action Service towards a European Maritime Security Strategy and more specifically the attention paid to the problem of piracy in East Africa and encourage Member States to put their weight behind such a Strategy.

ECSA and ETF call upon Member States to ensure that the fight against piracy in East Africa features as a key priority in the EU Maritime Security Strategy.

West Africa

Unfortunately a different piracy business model has emerged in West Africa, where the coastal states are sovereign (unlike Somalia in the past) and piracy is linked to oil theft, corruption and other types of maritime crime. Attacks are often more violent and usually target valuables on board, including the ship's cargo. However, the European Social Partners are increasingly worried by the increase of kidnappings of seafarers and hijackings of ships.

In 2013, 53 piracy incidents took place in West Africa, off the coast of Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Sadly, the first figures for 2014 confirm the raising trend.

ECSA and ETF call upon the EU and international partners to tackle this serious problem and to ensure that seafarers and ships can work in this region without being threatened. ECSA and ETF appreciate that the European External Action Service and the European Commission recognize the problem in their Communications 'Elements for a European Maritime Security Strategy' and 'Elements for the EU's Strategic Response to the Challenges in the Gulf of Guinea', endorsed as EU Strategy for the Gulf of Guinea by the Council in March 2014. However, data mentioned on EU shipping interests in the region are incorrect and underestimated. ECSA and ETF underline the need to have a better overall picture of EU interests in the Gulf of Guinea, as well as the need for more accurate data on occurring piracy and armed robbery events. To reflect the seriousness of the problem, it must be acknowledged that the area in question is a high risk one and appropriate measures to protect the crews must be provided.

ECSA and ETF hope that the seriousness of the problem of piracy and maritime crime in the Gulf of Guinea will be fully understood by the Members States and that the Implementation Plan of the Gulf of Guinea Strategy will put forward concrete proposals to address the critical maritime security problem in West Africa.

ECSA and ETF call upon all parties to take up their responsibilities and to ensure that the combination or toolbox of counter-piracy measures that has worked well in East Africa is adapted and further developed so that it can successfully be applied in the Gulf of Guinea.

To achieve this, a political dialogue with the involvement of regional African States is crucial and the EU must seek every opportunity to ensure these States take up their responsibility for improving maritime governance so as to enable the region to be connected to world trade and to develop.

This could involve the possibility for West African coastal States to invite third country naval forces to assist in combatting piracy and armed robbery in waters under their jurisdiction and conclude the necessary bilateral agreements to enable them to act, with robust rule of engagement. The above-mentioned countries may also consider

permitting ships to embark third country private armed security guards sailing into and out of waters under their jurisdiction and facilitate boarding and disembarking of the private armed security guards along with their weapons.

See also: [ECSA's position paper on piracy in East and West Africa from July 2013](#)
[ECSA-ETF joint statement from September 2013](#)

ECSA, the European Community Shipowners' Associations, comprises the national shipowners' associations of the EU and Norway. ECSA's aim is to promote the interests of European shipping so that the industry can best serve European and international trade and commerce to the benefit of shippers and consumers.

ETF, the European Transport Workers' Federation, represents more than 2.5 million transport workers from 243 transport unions and 41 European countries, in the following sectors: railways, road transport and logistics, maritime transport, inland waterways, civil aviation, ports & docks, tourism and fisheries.

For more information, please contact:

Patrick Verhoeven, ECSA Secretary General at Rue Ducale/Hertogstraat 67 – 1000 Brussels - Tel: +32 2 511 39 40 - email: Patrick.Verhoeven@ecsa.eu

Philippe Alfonso, ETF Political Secretary for Maritime Transport at Galerie Agora – Rue du Marché aux Herbes, 105 (bte 11) – 1000 Brussels - Tel. +32.2.285.45.84 - email p.alfonso@etf-europe.org