

Ministerens tale ved piraterikonference 28. marts 2012 i Bruxelles [varighed ca. 15 min.]

[ONLY THE SPEECH AS DELIVERED SHALL BE CONSIDERED AUTHORITATIVE]

[Indledning]

Good morning,

Let me begin by thanking the European Commission for organising this event together with us on this important issue.

And thank you, Director General Ruete and Vice-President Kallas, for your opening words.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a young man, a long time before I became a politician, I spent some time at sea.

This gives me an idea of what the life as a seafarer is like and a very small idea of how it is to be affected by piracy.

Before anything else my thoughts go to the seafarers and their families whose lives have been so tragically disrupted by piracy.

Piracy is in my view the biggest threat to international shipping and seafarers today.

That is a fact.

Beside piracy's great and terrible human costs it has serious economic consequences.

Some value the economic impact on international trade at around 7-12 billion US dollar a year.

The problems of piracy are serious and require a response from all of us.

We all need to work closely together and co-ordinate our actions.

[Internationale organisationer og EU's rolle]

Piracy has many aspects and our response has changed over time.

This means that today States, organisations and the shipping industry are involved at all levels.

This is greatly needed. The problem is so complex that the task of solving it must be shared.

It requires constant, and perhaps more active, coordination and dialogue.

The EU has a central role to play in the fight against piracy.

The Union has already made strong contributions, using the many instruments in the EU toolbox.

But I hope we can use this seminar to reflect on the EU efforts and see if we can improve them.

We have to make sure that we use our resources in the best way and that we do our utmost to combat this problem.

This means integrating all elements: Long term and short term measures to combat piracy.

In Denmark we, last year, looked at all our aims and measures taken in this area.

We looked at capacity-building, political, military and legal measures as well as the industry's own efforts.

The exercise reminded all of us that our response to piracy must take into account the many aspects of the problem.

The exercise proved that our response must be broad and not one-sided.

States cannot solve the problem by themselves.

Nor can the problem be treated by focusing on military efforts alone.

Co-operation and coordination among States, regions and organizations must go hand-in-hand if we are to make progress.

[Flådestyrker og flagstaters forpligtigelse til pirateribekæmpelse]

Fortunately, the co-operation regarding civil and military response is going well.

The naval forces and surveillance planes from the EU, NATO and individual States are doing a good job.

Earlier this month, the EU extended its counter-piracy mission. This decision will support the fight against piracy in coastal areas.

The naval forces and surveillance planes from the EU, NATO and individual States play an essential part of the fight against piracy.

As long as there is no coastal State to ensure safe waters off the coast of Somalia, this remains a necessary common effort.

In my view, each and every flag State that have ships sailing in waters, which are affected by piracy have a responsibility to contribute to the international fight against piracy.

[Industriens rolle og ansvar]

The efforts of the shipping industry to protect ships and seafarers cannot either be underestimated.

With the Best Management Practices issued the IMO, the international shipping community has shown that it is willing and able to take on responsibility to prevent attacks.

The majority of ships follow the recommendations in the Best Management Practices. But there are still ships that don't. These ships and the seafarers are thus in greater danger of being attacked. Therefore we need to ask ourselves how we can do it better.

We must continue to promote better compliance with the Best Management Practices. Not only the industry and the naval forces, but also flag States are responsible in this regard.

The work, however, is not finished. More ships need to comply with the self-protective measures. And we need to look at alternative ways to minimise the risks for seafarers. All measures must be considered including asking ourselves whether the Best Management Practices should be made mandatory and enforced as such. Further, we should even ask ourselves whether slow moving ships with low freeboard should be sailing in waters with piracy.

No party can defeat piracy by themselves. A strong partnership between all parts of the industry and the governments is vital and must be continued.

[De søfarende og gidslerne]

This leads me to another topic I also wish to touch upon.

The human cost.

We must not forget or neglect this aspect of piracy.

Ship owners have a responsibility.

They must take due care of the seafarers and prepare them and their families for situations, where piracy may be encountered.

Ship owners must take care of seafarers who is being held hostage.

That includes taking an active role in helping the seafarers to overcome the emotional strains from being held hostage.

I am very pleased that the human cost of piracy will be discussed at this seminar.

Recently, we have seen pirates using more violence against seafarers held hostage.

And we have seen pirates putting more pressure on families of the victims by publicising pictures and videos on Youtube.

For that reason the human cost of piracy must be kept on top of the global agenda.

[Civile bevæbnede vagter]

To lower the human cost of piracy we need to address one of the most significant developments for seafarers and ship owners in recent years.

The use of privately armed guards onboard ships.

It is a development most flag States and ship owners have only accepted with great hesitation.

The escalation of the situation off the Horn of Africa and the greater western Indian Ocean, however, has led to the current unfortunate situation.

For many ship owners, it is now common practice to use armed guards onboard ships to seafarers and ship against pirates.

We are all interested in making sure that guards are used in a controlled and regulated manner.

Further, it is in my view important to keep the international consensus that seafarers must not be armed.

When it comes to piracy a number of issues, both practical and legal, are still unresolved.

More work needs to be done at global level.

Therefore I am pleased that work on an international guidance on private armed security companies is underway.

[Afslutning]

Let me conclude by saying that the fight against piracy for the shipping industry remains a joint effort by international organizations, the industry, ship owners, seafarers and States.

I have several times stressed during my speech today that there is an obligation and a need for all of us to participate in this struggle against piracy.

We must not sit back and wait for the problem to disappear by itself.

Pirates have existed since human beings started to sail the oceans.

Throughout history piracy has been combated in different ways.

From history we know that there are no easy solutions.

Today piracy has one form and tomorrow maybe another form.

Therefore we have a long journey ahead of us. We must continue our joint work.

That the least we can do for the sake of the seafarers and their families.