

Speech notes for Mr Simpson - Seminar on piracy and armed robbery at sea, 28 March 2012.

- Armed robbery against ships is as old as maritime navigation itself and – like commerce, transport, and political conditions – has evolved and developed over the centuries;
- Today's situation is that we have a particular, but not isolated, problem with piracy off the coast of East Africa.
- Ships are routinely attacked and hostages taken.
- The end result being hundreds of seafarers injured, traumatised or killed;
- And economic losses that run into billions of dollars worth of trade.
- Let us be clear. It has nothing to do with the romantic notion of piracy associated with the Johnny Depp type hero, and everything to do with pure criminality.
- The sad fact is that the problem only really makes the news when EU citizens, typically careless holidaymakers, are kidnapped and held for ransom by pirates.
- But this only gives a distorted picture of the seriousness of the problem.
- The majority of hostages taken are Filipinos and Indians, who make up the majority of seafarers working on European flagged ships. The sad fact is that their plight very rarely makes for headline news.
- Yet it is vitally important to protect the 1.5 million seafarers in the world who move about 80% of global trade; For the sake of those engaged in the seafaring profession, it should be a top priority to ensure that they can go about their day to day job in a safe and secure way.
- It is in fact the shipping industry, faced with huge economic losses, either through the cost of ransoms, insurance and rerouting who again and again bring this issue to our attention.
- The losses totalling billions of euros are staggering. Ransom levels of 5 million US dollars per ship are being demanded and the total cost to the shipping sector is estimated at 6.6 billion US dollars.
- We already know what measures the EU has taken to try and address the problem and protect EU ships in the area. But what I am interested in today is, in view of the continuing problem, and the recent increase in

attacks we have seen since the beginning of the year, is there more that can be done?

- We already have the Atalanta mission, the EU's naval protection force up and running off the coast of East Africa.
- And I am pleased that its mandate, as requested by the European Parliament, has recently been extended beyond 2012.
- But I do question whether the mission has the necessary resources to carry out its mandate properly.
- I know that the NAVFOR mission works in close coordination with NATO and the Combined Maritime Forces, and I understand that the EU is also planning a new training mission to train and equip the Coastal Police Force in the Somali regions of Puntland, Somaliland and Galmudug.
- But I still wonder whether the total number of ships involved in the Atalanta mission is enough to cover the vast area that is the Indian Ocean and whether they should not at least be doubled to 20 warships if we are to provide adequate protection.
- I know that the European Parliament is also trying to identify ways of attributing additional resources to combating piracy.
- The European Parliament has sought to strengthen the EU's efforts in the fight against maritime piracy by pushing for greater use to be made of the European Maritime Safety Agency's existing satellite and data collection capacities.
- Another avenue that could be further explored, would be for Member States, in cooperation with Europol and Interpol, to investigate and trace money flows and confiscate the money which is paid as ransom to the pirates, helping to identify and dismantle the organised criminal networks that reap the profits of such acts.
- But as we all now all the measures mentioned above deal only with the symptoms of the problem.
- We all know piracy can only be eliminated by addressing its root causes, such as poverty and state failure.
- There very much needs to be a land based solution, not just a sea based one.
- The priority in the longer term has to be the restoration of law and order and Government authority in Somalia.

- In that regards both the EU and the rest of the world need to act at a political and economic level.
- And that is why I fully support the efforts of the EU in addressing the issue of poverty in Somalia.
- Without help on land it is clear that we will never solve the problem we face at sea.
- But I do believe that in the meantime, it is my responsibility as Chairman of the Transport Committee, to continue to push for more resources to be dedicated to addressing the major problems faced by all forms of maritime transport and shipping, including fishing vessels, operating in the region.