

Opening remarks by Ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri, Acting Permanent Representative, as the Chair of the 13<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session of the Contact Group on Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia at UN Headquarters in New York on December 11, 2012

Excellencies and Dear Colleagues,

It is a privilege and honour for me to chair the 13th Plenary Session of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia today on behalf of India.



Maritime piracy off the coast of Somalia and the humanitarian plight of hostages held by pirates remain a major cause of concern for India. Much of India's trade passes through the Gulf of Aden, estimated at over US \$ 160 billion annually. Indians constitute 7% of the world's seafarers and a consequence of piracy has been the tremendous human cost that these seafarers have had to pay.

Given the adverse impact of acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea has on maritime trade, seafarers and security, India attaches high priority to combating piracy, including in waters off the coast of Somalia. India has actively supported international efforts at the operational level, including through the participation in anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden since 2008 and has also deployed its ships in the Eastern and North Eastern Arabian Sea. Operations by the Indian Navy have helped neutralize several attempts of piracy.

While we will continue with counter-piracy operations, there is also an urgent need for the international community to address the serious problem of seafarers being taken as hostages and consequent humanitarian problems faced by them and their families. This would require active cooperation in the sharing of information for prosecution of pirates as well as in efforts to achieve an early release of seafarers that are held hostage by pirates.

During the course of last year there has been remarkable political progress in Somalia. This is a historic opportunity that must be seized for the full restoration of peace and stability in Somalia after two-decade long conflict. We hope that Somalia will continue to accord a high priority to counter-piracy.

There has been a welcome decline in the number of successful piracy attacks in 2012 compared to the previous years. As noted in various reports, the Piracy activity off the coast of Somalia has seen a significant drop this year. This is largely due to successful international counter-piracy efforts, including improving compliance with BMP and security measures, and continued counter-piracy naval action. However, as of 22 August 2012, the Somali pirates still held 11 ships and 188 hostages, including 42 Indian seafarers. The situation, therefore, continues to be fragile and the gains made against piracy could easily be reversed. We therefore, cannot afford to let our guard down at this stage or be complacent.

During its Presidency of the UN Security Council during November 2012, India organised an open debate of the Council on the issue of Piracy on 19 November. The Council adopted a significant Presidential Statement which expressed serious concern at the continuing violence used by pirates against seafarers and stressed the need for greater cooperation among all stakeholders for liberation of hostages and seafarers.

The UN Deputy Secretary General told the Council that three challenges required our immediate attention - better information sharing and trust building among countries and agencies involved in counter piracy efforts; stronger capacity to prosecute piracy-related cases; and the establishment of a framework governing the use of privately contracted armed security personnel on board vessels to ensure appropriate regulation and accountability.

India is a founding member of the CGPCS and we are very happy to be chairing this Plenary Session. This Contact group has played a pivotal role in international community's response to the threat of the piracy off the coast of Somalia which threatens the freedom of maritime navigation and has a destabilising effect on global trade and security and a negative humanitarian impact on seafarers and their families.

Chairing the Contact Group is largely a collaborative exercise involving the Chair as well as the Chairs of the Working Groups and other participants. I would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to the Chairs of the five working Groups for their support and as well as Spain which chaired the 12<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting in July 2012. Special thanks are also due to the Netherlands which shared their useful notes on the Contact Group workings with us making our job much easier.

In our discussions today, we would be examining the recent trends seen in the incidence of piracy attacks off the Coast of Somalia and in the wider Indian Ocean. We will also review the work done by the five Working Groups of the Contact Group and as well as other Groups since the last plenary meeting in July in coordinating counter-piracy efforts in their respective areas. I look forward to working with you in our deliberations today on how we can address the challenges and make our efforts more successful in taking the work of the Contact Group forward.

## AGENDA

The Agenda of the today's meeting is based on the standard format of the previous Plenary meetings

As you will see from the Agenda placed before you, which was circulated earlier by email that we will today listen to briefing by the Chairs of the five Working Groups of the Contact Group about the important work being done by them in their respective areas.

From the UN, Assistant Secretary General of Political Affairs, Mr. Taye-Brook Zerihoum will brief the Contact Group. We will also get an opportunity to listen to the Somalia's point of view from the PR of Somalia.

In addition to the five main working groups, we would listen to briefing from the US on the Meeting of Ad Hoc Working Group they had held in Washington on 12 September 2012 on the use of Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel (PCASP) which was attended by 24 states as well as representatives of the Industry.

UK will also be providing a briefing on Piracy Ransom Task Force whose Final report is will be circulated today.

In the post Lunch Session, we look forward to listening to briefing by the UN Department of Public Affairs DPA on the activities of the Trust Fund to Support Initiatives of States Countering Piracy off the Coast of Somalia.

If this Agenda is acceptable then we can proceed with adopting the Agenda.

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