

Statement by Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative,
during UN Security Council Debate on Maintenance of International Peace and
Security : Piracy on November 19, 2012

Let me begin by thanking Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliasson for his briefing on piracy and armed robbery at sea as well as on the annual report of the Secretary General on piracy off the coast of Somalia.

2. Even though the problem of piracy is as old as the history of maritime navigation, the international community is today facing it in unprecedented and growing dimensions. Starting off from the coast of Somalia, this threat now looms over an area of more than 2.8 million square miles, posing the patrolling naval forces with a formidable task.

3. Piracy is not only a threat to the freedom of maritime navigation, it is causing destabilizing effects on global and regional trade and security. The negative humanitarian impact of this threat on seafarers who are the lifeline of maritime shipping can no longer be ignored.

4. The Secretary General's successive reports present an alarming picture. Despite increased naval presence, pirate attacks off the coast of Somalia have continued, with little change in the level of violence employed by the pirates against seafarers and others. As of 22 August 2012, the Somali pirates still held 11 ships and 188 hostages, including 43 Indian seafarers. The problem is also intensifying in the Gulf of Guinea.

5. 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 and the Gulf of Guinea. 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.

6. 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. It requires active cooperation in the sharing of information, evidence and intelligence in the investigation, prosecution and sentencing of suspected pirates as well as in efforts to achieve an early release of seafarers that are held hostage by pirates.

7. Though naval ships deployed in the Gulf of Aden pursuant to the establishment of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) have successfully thwarted several piracy attempts and provided security

escorts to merchant marine in these waters, the growing scope and expanding coverage of the problem indicates that the naval operations alone may not be sufficient, and there is a need to adopt a comprehensive counter-piracy strategy, that includes efforts to deter pirates and the effective prosecution of pirates.

8. Any effort for prosecution and imprisonment of pirates cannot succeed without the effective involvement of the States in the region. Capacity building not only of Somalia but also of other States in the region is an essential component of this strategy. We commend the efforts of UNPOS, UNODC and UNDP in this regard, and urge them to continue their efforts. Their assistance to the States in the region should focus on four main areas - legal reforms to criminalize piracy, capacity building for prosecution and trial of piracy cases, effective law enforcement, and improvement of prison infrastructure in Somalia and States in the region.

9. India is of the firm view that steps to disrupt land-based pirate activities and the associated financial flows are absolutely necessary in a multi-dimensional counter-piracy approach. Therefore, it is essential to investigate and prosecute individuals and networks that provide the leadership, support and financial flows for the sustenance of piracy. This would require a broader criminal legislation, covering crimes of extortion, kidnapping, conspiracy, money laundering and financing of pirate activities, as also active collaboration and sharing of information and intelligence between private sector, States and relevant international organizations.

10. It should also be kept in mind that combating maritime piracy is an important issue that is intrinsically linked with the security situation in Somalia and in the States around the Gulf of Guinea. We hope that the new Government of Somalia will fully implement the counter-piracy measures delineated in the roadmap and will be supported by the UN and the international community. We also encourage States in the Gulf of Guinea and the region to continue taking all collaborative efforts, including through regional organizations, in combating piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea.

11. In conclusion, we would like to note that the increased presence of international and national naval forces have led to varying success rates of piracy attempts in different areas. . For example, action by the Indian navy has ensured that there has been no successful act of piracy in the area just off the western coast of India for over a year. Such trends require that the High Risk Area for piracy should be regularly reviewed in a transparent manner based on confirmed incidents of piracy. This is an absolute necessity for coastal states in the region and should be given due priority.

12. In addition, we fully endorse the conclusion of the Deputy Secretary General that three challenges require 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. We look forward to the Secretary General's next report, including on measures for the implementation of the Presidential Statement that the Council will adopt today.

Thank you.

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