

CONTACT GROUP ON PIRACY OFF THE COAST OF SOMALIA

MEETING OF WORKING GROUP 1 ON OPERATIONAL COORDINATION AND INFORMATION SHARING AND ESTABLISHMENT OF A POTENTIAL REGIONAL COORDINATION CENTRE, LONDON 24/25 FEBRUARY 2009

CHAIR'S CONCLUSIONS

(on his own authority/as basis for his report to the Contact Group in Cairo in March 2009)

Warm thanks were given to the Secretary General of the IMO and his team for facilitating the meeting at IMO Headquarters.

There was gratitude to the presenters for sharing a great deal of useful information, which had enabled an excellent exchange of views with a shared basis of knowledge. Copies of most of the presentations had already been made available, and the Chair would look to make copies available electronically as well.

The Working Group acknowledged and recognised the broader perspective of developments in Somalia against which its discussion had to be placed, although it was clear that the Group's mandate was much more narrowly focused.

The Working Group welcomed the wide range of valuable strands of activity on counter-piracy already underway in both the civil and military sectors, and agreed the key principle that any new measures or mechanisms should not duplicate them, but complement or add value to them.

Commercial shipping co-ordination and information sharing

Although it was too early to conclude that civil and civil-military co-ordination mechanisms are fully sufficient, the Working Group agreed that existing mechanisms worked well and any additional measures should not duplicate but build on them.

The Working Group agreed that the shipping industry/civil sector (including fisheries) should remain closely linked with any amendment of current practice/consideration of any new measures.

The Working Group agreed that a key focus of ongoing activity in information sharing should be to encourage maximum possible engagement by and with the shipping industry, notably small companies.

Military co-ordination

The Working Group agreed that it was essential that no mechanisms should threaten the integrity of the military chain of command.

The Working Group agreed that current co-ordination mechanisms worked.

The Working Group agreed that there was a requirement for further work to examine the effectiveness of co-operation and co-ordination between the EU military force/Combined Maritime Forces on the one hand and the countries which were not in either of these frameworks on the other so as to achieve maximum operational effectiveness/deliver maximum effect with limited resources.

The Working Group agreed to task the Chair to present an options paper for the next meeting, taking account of:

- a. existing mechanisms for co-ordination, including the EU operation's MSC-HOA and FEXWEB platforms and the Combined Maritime Force's SHADE deconfliction meetings;
- b. the proposals tabled by France for establishment of a Counter-Piracy Co-ordination Centre including military information sharing through a network of liaison officers;
- c. agreement that in the meantime that informal mechanisms as at (a) above should be used until possible alternative arrangements were agreed.

Regional Capability Development

The Working Group welcomed work already underway at the initiative of the IMO with countries in the region and also work under the auspices of the European Commission to

develop regional capacity to counter piracy, including under the Djibouti Code of Conduct. This includes the Regional Training Centre in Djibouti and IMO-supported information sharing centres in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Mombasa (Kenya) and Sana'a (Yemen). The Group noted the importance of short term delivery of capacity for counter-piracy, but underlined that projects should be taken forward within the overall framework already established in the region with the support of the IMO and European Commission.

The Working Group underlined the importance of regional capability development as the most sustainable solution to the current situation, and called for programmes to be taken forward as quickly as possible (brought forward if required) relating to Coastguard, naval/other military and rule of law structures, including judiciary and detention structures. These activities might include both training and equipping.

The Working Group agreed in this context on the need for an early and full assessment of needs, so that donors could consider effectively their priorities for funding support.

The Working Group agreed that there was a potential need for the proposed Counter-Piracy Co-ordination Centre in supporting regional capability development, so long as this was within the wider framework of/complementary to IMO-supported processes/structures. The Chair was tasked to produce options for discussion at the next meeting.

The Working Group agreed that there should be a role for the Working Group, or the Contact Group itself, in monitoring the progress of programmes supporting regional capability development, as necessary highlighting gaps, identifying solutions and ensuring they are delivered.

Future meetings

The Working Group discussed a number of areas of potential future activity, but agreed that it should await tasking from the Contact Group on whether to proceed with the work on the options paper outlined above and on other work as necessary.