



INTERNATIONAL
MARITIME
ORGANIZATION

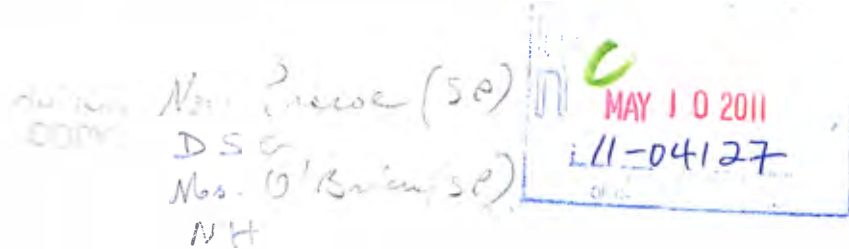
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SECRETARY-GENERAL

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5 May 2011



Mr. Ban Ki-Moon
Secretary-General
United Nations
New York, N.Y. 10017
United States of America

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Mr. Ban,

I write to apprize you of developments in the execution of our action plan to prevent and suppress piracy off the coast of Somalia and in the wider Indian Ocean to which, as you know, we have dedicated this year to orchestrating an effective response.

In general terms, there have been **good** and **bad** developments.

Among those falling under the **first category**, I would mention, in particular, the fact that:

- against 28 ships and 656 seafarers in the hands of pirates at the beginning of the year, these numbers have, by the end of 3 May, fallen to 26 and approximately 520 respectively; and
- out of 141 attempts to hijack ships, since the beginning of the year, only 26 (that is 18.4.% of the total) ended with attacked ships taken hostage. This percentage compares favourably with an average of above 40% experienced in preceding years.

These good developments should be mainly attributed to:

- enhanced coordination and intensified efforts by the naval assets deployed to protect shipping in the Indian Ocean risk areas; and
- the effectiveness of the best management practice measures (preventive, evading and defensive) IMO and the shipping industry have been promulgating for some time now.



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Among those developments falling under the **second category**, I would specify, in particular:

- evidence that the pirates have become more aggressive, audacious, violent and better organized; and
- the fact that they have recently expanded their area of operation to the north to the eastern coast of Oman and to the east almost to the meridian that crosses the western coast of the Indian subcontinent. To reach such long distances from Somalia and extend their operations even during the monsoon periods, they use "mother ships", which are mostly captured merchant vessels. In many instances, they do not hesitate to use seafarers as "human shields" to keep naval vessels at bay.

Without mentioning the horrific consequences of a cruise ship falling in the hands of pirates or a hijacked fully laden very large tanker causing an oil spill disaster, I fear that, should we not succeed at stemming the scourge that modern day piracy has become, we may face a situation whereby:

- seafarers may refuse to sail on merchant ships bound for western Indian Ocean waters; and/or
- we may experience a further disruption to shipping services and thus a further disruption to global supply chains making use of strategic shipping lanes (such as the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf of Aden) over and above the reported 7 to 12 billion US dollars piracy has been found to cost the world economy annually.

With both the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea serving a significant portion of international seaborne trade and with due regard to the nature of the cargoes (oil, minerals and manufactured goods) being transported through piracy-infested regions, the repercussions of not focusing diligently, persistently and consistently on the problem at hand will be grave for all parties concerned.

Notwithstanding the measures, we (IMO, UNODC, the Contact Group, to mention but a few) are taking in the medium to long term, I believe that better results to stem ships falling in the hands of pirates in the short term could be achieved if:

- more naval vessels and military aircraft were made available to protect merchant ships in the troubled waters off Somalia;
- merchant ships, sailing through the same waters, complied with the recommended best management practice measures – the current less than 40% compliance rate being considered totally unacceptable; and, above all,
- Governments showed that their political will to combat piracy matches the level of their political ambition to deal with the problem.

It is the latter case of "**political will**" expressed and put into effect as strongly as possible that I turn to you for support and action as you may deem appropriate. I know that, with recent developments in various parts of the world (not least in the Middle East and north Africa), the time may not seem to be ideal for Governments to spare more resources to the cause of piracy-fighting but I believe that, against the background of the very negative repercussions highlighted above if we left the issue unattended, the strong political will advocated should be pursued regardless. This, I also believe, is a cause that only **you** could embrace and bring to fruition – and this is mainly the reason of this letter.

I should, therefore, be most grateful for your decisive action to mobilize strong and effective political will (especially among States, that have the capacity to do so, to take part actively in the fight against piracy off the coast of Somalia ... by deploying naval vessels and military aircraft and through seizure and disposition of boats, vessels, arms and other related equipment used in the commission of piracy ... and undertake all necessary measures that are appropriate in Somalia, as called upon and encouraged by the Security Council in resolution 1851 and subsequent resolutions on the Somali piracy issue). Such strong political will might be pursued through, for example:

- raising the matter with UN Security Council Permanent Members;
- doing the same with other countries (e.g. Brazil, Japan, India, the Republic of Korea, South Africa, etc.), whose political clout may be used to bring pressure to bear;
- your and the Security Council's efforts to advance a solution to Somalia's political problem; and
- urgent follow-up action to strengthen the rule of law in Somalia by establishing specialized courts in the country as well as an extra-territorial specialized Somali court, as suggested by your former special adviser on piracy.

Needless for me to add that I am at your disposal for any supplementary information you may wish to ask on an issue that, I am sure you will agree, leaves much to be desired.

With warm personal regards,

Yours sincerely,



E.E. Mitropoulos
Secretary-General