

Final Declaration of the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Foreign Affairs high-level Counter-Piracy Conference 2011, co-organised with global ports operator DP World.

Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 18-19 April, 2011.

The participants present at the United Arab Emirates Counter-Piracy Conference, entitled 'Global Threat, Regional Responses: Forging a Common Approach to Maritime Piracy', consisting of states and maritime industry organisations, have agreed the following points:

1. Maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea continue to represent a grave threat to Somalia and other states in the region, as well as to worldwide international navigation, the safety of global commercial maritime routes, and the safety of seafarers and other persons. The escalation of pirate attacks in 2011 has hurt global trade and commerce, and has a damaging impact on peace, security and stability throughout the world.
2. In order to be effective, the international community, including states and industry, must work together and actively pursue a comprehensive and fully resourced approach to combating piracy and the conditions from which it arises. In this regard, the participants to this Conference recognise the important role played by the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, and call upon all members of the international community to fully endorse, support, and fund its initiatives to combat piracy in all its aspects. They also acknowledge the importance of raising awareness about the phenomenon of piracy, particularly through the use of media, thus reaffirming their support to the communication strategy adopted by the Contact Group.
3. Maritime piracy is a threat to all nations and is a crime subject to universal jurisdiction. States are called upon to favourably consider the prosecution of suspected, and imprisonment of convicted, pirates, consistent with applicable international human rights law and United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1918 (2010), 1950 (2010), and 1976 (2011).
4. The military response to maritime piracy has reduced the success rate of pirate attacks. This response must be continuously and vigorously pursued, including, when feasible, through proportionate action adapted to the complexity of the attacks, with states in the region that have the capacity to do so extending support, where possible. This may include assistance in basing and logistical support to operations consistent with applicable international law.
5. The international counter-piracy effort increasingly highlights the role of those funding piracy operations and others involved indirectly in the financing of piracy. The effective tracking and disrupting of illicit financial flows is an important tool to deter acts of piracy and to apprehend and prosecute those who finance piracy.
6. Some participants expressed concern over the critical issue of ransom payment and its impact on piracy.

7. The international community, including industry, must expand the resource-base available to projects supporting capacity building and economic developments in Somalia and other states directly suffering from piracy. This should include the provision of coordinated training as well as material and financial resources to improve land-based security capacity and livelihoods in Somalia, to deter and prevent piracy. In this context, the pledging of over US\$ 5 million to the Trust Fund to Support the Initiatives of States to Counter Piracy off the Coast of Somalia and to other industry-led on-shore development projects, is recognized as a transformative moment in ensuring a fully resourced, comprehensive public-private counter-piracy approach.

8. The international community must pursue a comprehensive strategy of support to Somalia, which prioritises assisting the Federal Authority, the regional authorities of Galmudug, Puntland, and Somaliland, in improving security conditions and establishing a system of governance and rule of law. Building up the judiciary sectors, facilitating the pursuit of sustainable economic development for the population of Somalia, and establishing an effective, trained and equipped maritime law enforcement force are essential elements in this process. This is in recognition that no durable eradication of maritime piracy in the Gulf of Aden and wider Indian Ocean is possible without a long-term regional and global solution to counter state failure, instability, and other underlying causes of piracy in Somalia.

9. The participants to this Conference call upon the Somali Federal and regional authorities to cooperate and set up an internal joint coordination mechanism for security and judiciary sector development to enhance the effectiveness of the support given by the international community.

10. There is serious concern at the inhumane conditions which hostages in the captivity of pirates face. Humanitarian initiatives designed to relieve the suffering of captive mariners and others exposed to traumatic incidents of piracy attack, including their families, should be expanded by states, industry, and humanitarian organisations. Participants to this conference call upon relevant United Nation Offices to hold a conference to address this concern, including through identifying specific programmes to alleviate the suffering of victims of piracy.

11. It is critical that ship owners and operators fully implement the guidance issued by the International Maritime Organization, including the industry-developed Best Management Practices. The industry needs to take note of and act upon the piracy-related warnings to shipping issued by naval organisations and the regional information centres established under the Djibouti Code of Conduct, in order to give ships, their masters, and crews the greatest possible chance of avoiding and countering piracy attacks, including through contributing to, drawing from, and pooling of information.

12. The Djibouti Code of Conduct, drafted under the auspices of the International Maritime Organization in January 2009, offers the appropriate framework to deepen regional cooperation. In the context of regional cooperation and ownership, the Conference acknowledges the importance of the Regional Strategy and Action Plan against piracy and for maritime security adopted by the Eastern and Southern African and Indian Ocean region, which draws upon the Djibouti Code of Conduct.

13. As maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea expand in other areas, such as the central and western coasts of Africa, the international community should consider the pursuit of a comprehensive strategy of supporting and encouraging regional organisations to develop regional and multilateral coast guard systems and other counter-piracy instruments.