

HR/VP C Ashton's Opening Remarks

Regional Conference on Piracy

(Mauritius) 7/10/2010

Your Excellency, Prime Minister of Mauritius

Ministers, Secretaries General

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Thanks: to the Mauritian Government for hosting this meeting. IOC (Indian Ocean Commission) and COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa) for taking the lead in preparing the substance of our discussions today.
- Piracy is an international scourge affecting all of our shipping and also for instance aid efforts in the region.
- We are partners in finding a solution to this problem - the conference here today is testament to that.
- We are already doing a lot at sea and today taking important step - launching a regional maritime strategy.
- Still: clear that the root causes of piracy lies on land, in the continued instability of Somalia.
- The EU is the top donor for development and reconstruction assistance to Somalia. 87 projects with funding amounting to about 200 million euro are in place throughout Somalia.
- The EU rule of law and security programme shows our commitment to contribute to efforts tackling the root causes of piracy on land.
- EU will continue to provide strong support to Somalia - including in Somaliland and Puntland.
- The international community must make every effort to assist Somalia in re-establishing peace, security and rule of law and to create the conditions for economic growth.
- However, in the meantime we cannot ignore the serious problems piracy is causing to stability, security and economic and social

development of the region and we must take determined action against it.

- EU leading international efforts against piracy off the coast of Somalia with Atalanta operation.
- But prevention is not enough. Impunity only encourages criminal activity. We are therefore also closely cooperating with a number of countries in the region on prosecution and detention of captured pirates.
- We are also reaching out to more countries asking them to share the burden in these efforts.
- A sustainable solution requires regional ownership and responsibility. Regional approach important – first meeting in the Seychelles in May of this year is already bearing fruits.
- The region has come together in an unprecedented way to develop a joint approach to tackle piracy. The EU attaches great importance to this initiative and will assist you.
- Your initiative demonstrates determination, ownership, solidarity and intra-regional burden sharing.
- A regional strategy would ideally build on and complement already existing initiatives and frameworks such as the Djibouti Code of Conduct, combining national and regional activities in a coherent framework.
- Such a coherent regional framework would:
 - facilitate cooperation and burden-sharing in the region, and
 - ideally provide a regional political framework to support national action.
- We need to act fast in implementing the new regional strategy and action plan. We are ready to assist you to make this happen.
- I commend the region for the work already undertaken, in particular at the Seychelles workshop, and I welcome that the COMESA Summit in August endorsed this regional approach.
- This is a solid platform to build upon. Thanks to colleagues at the technical and senior officials level who worked yesterday and the day before yesterday to provide us with a good strategy and action plan to consider today.
- I thank you all for your attention and wish us a productive day.