



European Economic and Social Committee

PRESS

CES/13/6
25 January 2013

EU needs a new strategy to combat maritime piracy

In a bid to move the EU away from its current piecemeal action against piracy, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) has put forward a comprehensive strategy to combat this scourge. The strategy was discussed by decision-makers and stakeholders at a [hearing](#) organised yesterday by the Committee.

"Piracy is not only a maritime problem. It is also a humanitarian, trade and global one, affecting consumers and taxpayers around the world," said [Dr Anna Bredima](#) (Greece, Vice-President of the EESC's Employers Group), rapporteur for the opinion.

Piracy worldwide costs the staggering sum of USD 7-12 billion every year, with 18 000 vessels sailing annually through piracy-infested waters. 3 million barrels of oil and half the world's container trade transit daily from areas of the Indian Ocean that are threatened by pirates.

The EU, which controls 40% of world shipping, cannot afford any escalation of piracy, said the EESC. "If the wave of piracy goes unchecked, the whole supply chain of goods and energy risks being disrupted," said Stéphane Buffetaut, president of the EESC Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and Information Society.

This is why the EESC called on the EU institutions and Member States to muster the political will needed to come forward with a multi-faceted anti-piracy strategy. "The EU needs to come up with an appropriate mix of the tools it has at its disposal: trade and development aid, military presence, reconstruction and capacity-building," said Dr Bredima.

In her key-note speech, [Commissioner Damanaki](#) indicated that the European Commission was currently drafting a new "EU security strategy for the global maritime domain". Its first step would be to generate "real-time situational awareness of all activities at sea". By interlinking civilian and military communities, it would result in better cross-border information sharing, which in turn would facilitate decision-making and improve maritime governance.

Short-term fix not an option

"We are not under any illusion that short-term measures can wipe piracy out," said Dr Bredima, insisting on long-term strategies combining capacity building in failed states and direct economic incentives offering credible livelihood alternatives to piracy.

Her view was echoed by [Peter Van Dalen, MEP](#), who insisted on the need to strengthen the prosecution capacity of the countries off whose coast pirates operate. "Effective persecution of pirates in the region where they are active is paramount," he said.

Commissioner Damanaki added: "Prosecution should reach the true instigators and financiers, not just the small pawns, the 'foot soldiers'. This requires strong political will from countries."

Patrolling the EU with 20 police cars

While backing the UN decision to extend the mandate of the European Union Naval Force Somalia (EU-NAVFOR-ATALANTA) until 2014, the EESC said its geographical scope must be broadened to include West Africa as well.

"The current naval presence in the Indian Ocean can be likened to patrolling an area the size of Europe with 20 police cars," said Dr Bredima.

[Georgios Koumoutsakos](#), MEP said that a side effect of concentrating anti-piracy efforts on Somalia was that it just re-emerged in other parts of the world, including the Gulf of Guinea and western Africa.

Disrupting money flows

The EESC believes that military measures should go hand in hand with decisive action aimed at disrupting the pirates' financial networks. The first step should be better tracking of financial flows and the setting up of an EU blacklist of institutions involved in laundering money from piracy. Some of the ransom money that may have been deposited in EU banks must be traced and confiscated, said the EESC.

"The naming and shaming of complicit financial institutions is a necessary step in the battle against piracy," said Peter van Dalen, MEP.

The EESC also said that Member States could make use of qualified private armed guards on board vulnerable ships, with the proviso that the use of private forces be subjected to stringent EU and international conditions. Commissioner Damanaki concurred, saying: "This practice must be implemented cautiously, with good control."

The EESC was adamant that legislation in EU countries must be amended to re-criminalise piracy and create a consistent legal framework for prosecuting pirates.

For more information, please contact:

Karin Füssl, Head of the Press Unit

E-mail: karin.fussl@eesc.europa.eu

Tel.: +32 2 546 8722