

EU-Somalia: European Union Ambassadors meet Puntland's President for talks on maritime priorities

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Today, the European Union Ambassadors met with the President of Puntland, Dr. Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, and his Cabinet on board the French EU Naval Force flagship, FS Siroco to discuss key issues related to political, security and development cooperation, and to participate in a special session on maritime security.

The event builds on two previous meetings held last year at sea with Somali Federal authorities off the coast of Mogadishu and aims to further foster the partnership between Somalia, the European Union and its member states.

The Puntland authorities met with EU Ambassadors from France, UK, Spain, Netherlands, Italy and Denmark. The EU Special Envoy to Somalia, Michele Cervone d'Urso, the EU Naval Force Deputy Operation Commander, Rear Admiral Bartolomé Bauza, the Mission Commander of the EU Training Mission to Somalia, Brig. General Mingiardi and Head of Mission of EU Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP) Nestor, Etienne de Poncins also attended the event. The visit at sea was seen as a unique opportunity for the European Union family to present its comprehensive approach to the Horn of Africa. In particular, it was discussed how the different EU instruments can support Puntland's role in the development of the comprehensive Somali Maritime and Resources Strategy as included in the New Deal Compact.

Speaking about the event at sea, President Abdiweli stated, *"We welcome this renewed cooperation with the European Union to improve maritime security in Puntland. Maritime cooperation, coordinated with other national and international stakeholders, will have an important effect on the events on land, on security at sea and on the development of our coastal areas"*.

EU Special Envoy to Somalia, Michele Cervone d'Urso said: *"Puntland's role in Somalia's path towards peace and stability is crucial. Crucial for Somalia's development, but also crucial for Somalia's security which includes maritime security. Together with the EU Naval Force's 'Atalanta' mission and the EU Capacity Building 'Nestor' mission, the EU and other international partners will continue to engage with the Somalis to increase their capabilities to fight piracy and other illegal activities at sea and to reinforce maritime security. This will allow them to have safer seas and thus enable them to benefit from their maritime resources."*

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) also launched on board the EU flagship, a new project called the *Fishermen Identification Database System*, which will provide Puntland's fishermen with an individual ID card. By registering its own fishermen, the Puntland authorities will be able to identify who fishes in its waters and to collect essential data to ensure an effective fisheries management and sustainable use of resources. Moreover, it will help to differentiate fishermen from possible piracy suspects. This USD 400.000 project is financed by the *Trust Fund to Support the Initiatives of States to Counter Piracy off the Coast of Somalia*. Trust Fund donors include EU Member States Germany, the Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain and Belgium. (END)

Background:

- EU Naval Force Operation Atalanta deters, prevents and represses acts of piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia. EU Naval Force ships protect World Food Programme vessels delivering aid to Somalia and AMISOM shipping. EU Naval Force ships also contribute to the monitoring of fishing activity off the Somali Coast. See: www.eunavfor.eu

