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Transcript

The Role of Seychelles in Counter-Piracy

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Jean Paul Adam

Ladies and gentlemen, because the oceans are a shared legal space, it is clear that any response to piracy must involve intensive international and multilateral negotiations and discussions. From the outset, Seychelles has taken its role as a reliable partner in the fight against piracy very seriously. We have established meaningful partnership through a number of bilateral and multilateral arrangements that are beginning to bear fruit.

Firstly we have established military surveillance partnerships with all the countries that have a stake in the security of the Indian Ocean. This includes the EU and individual member countries of the EU including the UK, as well as NATO, the US, China, India and Russia. We are also expanding our partnership through discussions with Australia, South Africa, South Korea and Japan among others wishing to be more involved. And Seychelles has also played a key role in mobilising support within the region by requesting that regional organisations such as COMESA and SADC take up the issue. Our advocacy has led to the creation of an EU funded regional project to build the maritime capacity of the Eastern African and Indian Ocean region.

We have welcomed partners to participate in enhanced surveillance and intervention using Seychelles geo-strategic position and the EU have positioned surveillance aircraft operating under operation Atalanta in Seychelles, as have NATO under operation Ocean Shield. The Indian Government has also positioned a Dornier aircraft within our forces to boost surveillance capacity, while the UK government has also re-equipped our own Coastguard's twin otter with new state of the art surveillance equipment. The US has also based three drones in Seychelles to provide information about pirate group and pirate vessel movements. We believe that to have so many diverse partners involved is a positive model for solving problems of this nature. With the backdrop of the Arab spring and tension over Iran and Syria in the nearby Middle East, the ability of so many states with different perspectives on international military cooperation to coordinate their efforts is nothing short of ground breaking. In this post cold war landscape, it is clear that it is important to create the space for international partners to bring resources together in a meaningful way. Seychelles is committed to continue creating this space.

Concerning prosecutions, Seychelles has indicated clearly its determination to end the impunity of criminal groups engaged in piracy. We note the various recommendations and proposals that have been formulated to tackle the prosecution of pirates, including the Secretary General's report of 2010 that summarises options including an international court, a regional court or a

domestic court with international components. In Seychelles' experience we have already demonstrated our ability to prosecute pirates successfully from vessels of a number of nationalities under our legislation.

The key bottleneck that remains is in the question of detention capacity. This is where the issue of being able to have appropriate internationally monitored prison facilities available in Somalia is crucial. Seychelles has signed prisoner transfer agreements with the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia as well as the regional governments of Puntland and Somaliland, with a view to being able to transfer prisoners convicted for piracy in Seychelles to their prison facilities in the near future. If these transfers are possible, it can completely revolutionise the response to piracy, as there is a clear complete cycle of justice from arrest to incarceration. It will allow us to send a clear statement that pirate groups cannot act with impunity indefinitely. It is essential that this issue is resolved as a matter of priority.

The question of piracy can also not be viewed in isolation without addressing the wider issue of stability in Somalia. President James Michel has recently written to world leaders to propose innovative strategies to better engage in the establishment of law and order in Somalia and the resolution of the scourge of piracy. With over 30 years of instability, it is clear that there is no silver bullet on Somalia. The international community must be prepared to be engaged at several levels and on several fronts simultaneously. It is our hope that the London Conference on Somalia will deliver on a number of these priorities. President Michel has outlined five key areas that require attention from the international community.

Firstly it is imperative that we widen the scope and strengthen the mandate of the peacekeeping force being operated by AMISOM. We also recommend that consideration be given to have a maritime component of AMISOM to better secure the coast of Somalia and allow the Somali Government to engage in protection and development of legitimate economic activities using coastal resources. Somalia's borders do not end on its beaches. Secondly, it is essential to displace the network of terrorist groups active in Somalia particularly led by al Shabaab and thereby reducing their ability to destabilise the political process.

Thirdly we must prioritise the further strengthening of existing areas of relative stability in Somalia, by working both with the central TFG government and regional authorities, in keeping within the context of the Kampala process governing the political negotiations in Somalia. We must build institutions that can enforce the rule of law within Somalia. The building of prisons and other

law enforcement infrastructure in such areas is very important, as it allows the international community to end the impunity currently enjoyed by pirates. Fourthly we must continue to invest in the strengthening of the capacity of regional states in the fight against piracy. It is important that the principles of burden sharing in accordance with capacity are adopted. Seychelles has led the way in establishing a model of prosecutions that can work for the whole region. We can do more with the right support. And so can many others.

Finally, it is important that we strengthen intelligence sharing networks, particularly with a view to targeting the financiers of piracy. I am pleased that after many discussions, the Seychelles and British Governments will be signing an agreement over the next few days to set up a dedicated centre in the Seychelles aiming at tracking and disabling the assets of such groups.

Ladies and gentlemen, finding long term solutions to maritime piracy are essential for us to speak of development in Somalia itself. Piracy is an attack on human development at the most basic level, because it disrupts any attempt to spread prosperity beyond those that are benefitting from criminal activity. In stabilising Somalia, we must work both on the sea and the land. Somalia's borders do not end on its beaches. We must strengthen the capacity of Somalia to be able to combat criminal activity, and thereafter make full use of its resources for its own development. Despite all the challenges, we believe that our own experiences as a small nation determined to make a difference can provide many ideas that can take this debate forward.

We thank you for your attention.

[Applause]

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

His Excellency Jean-Paul Adam has served as Minister for Foreign Affairs for the Republic of the Seychelles since June 2010. He began his diplomatic career at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1996 and subsequently served as Director General Presidential Affairs and then as Secretary of State. He holds a bachelors degree in English Literature and French from the University of Sheffield and a Masters in International Political Economy from the University of Manchester.