

STATEMENT BY MR. DUSHYANT SINGH, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, ON PIRACY  
IN THE GULF OF GUINEA AT THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL ON  
OCTOBER 19, 2011

Thank you, Madam President, for giving me the floor.

First of all, I would like to join others in placing on record our appreciation of the Nigerian delegation for organizing this meeting on an issue that is becoming a major threat to maritime navigation, trade and economic activities in the Gulf of Guinea. I also would like to thank the Secretary General and the representatives of ECOWAS, ECCAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) for their comprehensive briefings. Their participation in the meeting today is important for the problem of piracy and maritime robbery is a regional one and can be addressed only through cooperation of the regional stakeholders.



2. Madam President, piracy off both the coasts of Africa has become a serious obstacle to the developmental aspirations of the region. The increasing attacks on shipping vessels off the Western Coast of Africa, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea, are affecting the oil industry in the region that comprises of Nigeria, Angola and Equatorial Guinea, the largest producers of oil in the Sub Saharan Africa. This compounds the problem in the region, which is already faced with other problems such as illegal narcotic trade and proliferation of small arms.

Madam President,

3. India has been at the forefront of highlighting the menace of piracy off the coast of Somalia and stressing the urgent need for the international community to work towards a comprehensive counter-piracy strategy. India is also concerned about new surge in piracy and maritime robbery in the Gulf of Guinea.

While the two situations are different in proportion at this stage, it is quite possible that the failure of the international community to act decisively against piracy off the coast of Somalia could have spawned a new surge in piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

Madam President,

4. A number of unemployed youth are becoming attracted to the business of piracy and maritime robbery, which they find involves low cost and risk, but yields high returns. The problem is, therefore, fast assuming proportions of an organized cartel in the countries of western Africa. The societal issues, poverty, unemployment, political instability, lack of appropriate naval infrastructure and weak prosecution system are not helping counter-piracy efforts.

5. While incidents of piracy and maritime robbery in the Gulf of Guinea are considered by many to be under-reported, they have already escalated from low-level armed robberies to hijackings, cargo thefts and large-scale robberies. Pirates have also shown propensity to employ torture and other forms of physical violence and abuse against sailors and crew. Keeping in view the increasing incidents, there is a need to pay special attention on the safety, security and wellbeing of seafarers taken as hostage and their quick release by appropriate means. Also, in view of large investments that the countries have made in the oil industries in the region and increasing export of oil from the region, there is an urgent need to act now before the problem assumes even greater intensity and proportion.

Madam President,

6. It is, therefore, time that proper attention is given to this problem. We are happy to note that the countries in the region, being clearly aware of the problem, have started making efforts collectively to address the problem. India would like to commend Nigeria for taking a lead on this initiative along with other affected countries in the region. We are also glad that the Security Council has been seized of this matter and in the last few months the Council's deliberations and press releases have helped increase awareness. Concrete action now needs to be taken and in this connection, it is important that countries in the region

work together in joint counter-piracy efforts, sharing of information and capacity building of naval forces. In addition, strengthening of legal system to ensure effective and expeditious prosecution is also critical. We welcome the decision of the countries to convene a special meeting of GGC countries in Equatorial Guinea to discuss this issue.

7. The international community, led by the United Nations, should help these regional efforts by providing resources for capacity building of coast guards and naval forces. This would greatly help in effective patrolling of the sea and surveillance along the coast.

8. UN agencies in the region, particularly UNOWA and UNOCA along with UNODC and IMO, have an important role to play in regional counter-piracy efforts, as also in addressing related problems of terrorism, illicit trafficking of drugs and proliferation of small arms as they all conspire together to destabilize the region. Towards this end, we welcome the upcoming visit of the UN assessment mission to examine the situation and explore modalities for UN support.

9. In conclusion, Madame President, India stands ready to contribute to international efforts aimed at increasing effective cooperation among States to tackle the threat of piracy and armed robbery at sea and for the safety and release of hostages taken by pirates.

Thank you.

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