



Horn of Africa Peace and Development Center

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SOMALI PIRACY: A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION

The Horn of Africa Peace and Development Center is a civic society organization that is dedicated to the achievement of stability, democracy, respect for human rights and rule of law as well as socio-economic development in the Horn of Africa comprising Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia.

Summary

The crime of piracy is seriously disrupting international sea transportation in the vicinity of Somalia. The international community has so far applied a knee-jerk reaction to the challenge of piracy through military actions. It is the view of this Center that the scourge of piracy will not go away unless the underlying causes are carefully considered and dealt with in such a manner that lasting and sustainable solutions are determined and applied.

Piracy: A Crime

It should be clearly stated right at the outset that piracy is a crime that cannot be condoned under any circumstances and deserves to be eliminated using all reasonable means that are likely to have a lasting impact.

Negative Impact of Piracy

The scourge of piracy is a serious challenge not only to the international community but also to the people of the Horn of Africa.

Numerous countries which originate shipments and those to which the goods are destined as well as those which own the ships are suffering serious losses and disruptions as a result of the increasingly rampant crime of piracy around Somalia. Millions of dollars incurred as a result of the delays and disruptions of sea transportation caused by the pirates and the ransom money that had to be paid to the criminals is an unacceptable situation that has to be dealt with in an effective manner.

It should be noted also that countries in the region including Kenya, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia are suffering from disruptions of shipments due to the criminal activities of the pirates. One of the most tragic and ironic aspects of the piracy is that, among the victims of the crime, are the huge number of Somalis themselves who are made to suffer immensely due to delays in the delivery of food they so desperately need.

One other gravely important emerging situation is the increasing military presence of numerous countries including those of USA, France, India, Iran, China, etc. in the Horn of Africa as a direct result of the scourge

of piracy around Somalia. The negative impact of such a predicament for both the international community as well as the countries of the Horn of Africa is quite obvious.

Therefore, the costs and negative impact of the on-going crime of piracy around Somalia poses a serious challenge to the international community including the African Union, the Arab League, the European Union, and countries such as Iran, USA, and the countries in the Horn of Africa.

Fundamental Causes

The piracy in Somalia is a symptom of serious underlying constraints that have been afflicting the country and the countries in the Horn of Africa for a long time. It can also be stated categorically that the advent of the piracy could be ascribed to the virtual negligence of the Somalia issue by the international community.

For some twenty years, Somalia has been in existence without a viable government, torn apart by clan violence that has devastated the country politically and economically. Although there is a semblance of stability in parts of Somalia i.e. Somaliland and Puntland, chaos and instability still reign in southern Somalia where, for the first time in many years, a new leadership seems to emerge with hopeful signs of achieving some peace.

The other countries in the Horn of Africa, Djibouti, Eritrea and Ethiopia are not only beset by lack of democracy and a grinding poverty but also engage in proxy conflicts within Somalia. Neighbors that should normally be expected to come to the aid of Somalia actually add fuel to the fire by acting in support of one clan or the other as well as in carrying out their conflicts within Somalia.

The international community has virtually neglected the sad situation in Somalia. The major powers that are actively engaged in the Horn of Africa, namely, USA and France have significant military presences in tiny Djibouti aimed, mainly, at containing or preventing any possible terrorism from Somalia and the rest of the Horn of Africa. It should also be noted that the international community had turned a blind eye to the serious alarm expressed by Somalia as regards the dumping of toxic materials within its borders by irresponsible parties which were taking advantage of the chaos prevailing in the country.

The consequence of the instability and continued abject poverty in Somalia is that some people without any hope or positive prospects have resorted to extreme measures for their very survival including the perpetration of the crime of piracy. For the few, the chaos in Somalia has presented them with a unique opportunity to engage, without any local restraint, in a daring series of piracy which has now reached serious proportions for the international community.

Practical Solutions

In order to rid Somalia of the crime of piracy, it is absolutely essential to apply comprehensive or holistic measures that respond to the underlying issues which are prevalent in the country as well as the Horn of Africa.

The Center fully understands that the pirates cannot be allowed to continue with their crime with impunity. Therefore, appropriate measures such as preventive military action, the control of their financial operations, the presence of a more significant policing of the international sea lanes adjacent to Somalia, etc. will need to be undertaken as short-term measures. Such actions, however, will not, by themselves, solve the problem in the long-term.

For the purpose of dealing with the fundamental challenges in a consistent, robust, resilient, and sustainable manner, it is essential for the international community to address, for a change, Somalia's economic problems as well as the support it desperately needs to foster stability, peace and democracy. It is only with such a meaningful and substantial support that a strong enough government could emerge in Somalia in order

to have a tight control over the current lawlessness including the crime of piracy that is causing so much disruption internationally.

The Center is also of the view that the problem in Somalia cannot be resolved unless the socio-economic and political issues prevalent in the Horn of Africa as a whole are fully addressed. The Center further believes that due to the following reasons, it would be in the interests of the international community to deal with the problems being faced by the people of the Horn of Africa:

- (a) The Horn of Africa has currently a population of 100 million which is expected to increase to 144 million in twenty years.
- (b) The region has immense agricultural, mineral and water resources. After all, 86% of the water that cascades to Egypt originates from Ethiopia.
- (c) It can have a substantial positive impact on international trade as the Horn of Africa possesses seven strategically located ports on the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean.
- (d) The Horn of Africa is the seat of important international organizations, namely, the African Union, the Economic Commission for Africa, and the Intergovernmental Agency for African Development.
- (e) The establishment of a Red Sea Cooperative Council comprising the surrounding countries could bring about an economic benefit to all stakeholders as a result of utilizing the complementary resources: oil and investment resources on the Arab side and agricultural, human, mineral, and water resources on the African side.

The Center, therefore, suggests that the international community provide support to Somalia in establishing an effective coast guard that is able to control and fight against the crime of piracy. The Center further recommends that the underlying challenges being encountered in the Horn of Africa, namely, the lack of democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, and freedom of expression, as well as the prevalence of a rampant corruption, poverty, and endemic diseases such as malaria, TB, etc. be addressed fully so that stability, peace, good governance, and prosperity will prevail in the region. This could be achieved by, among other things, the utilization of the current huge resources being applied by the international community for military purposes to the promotion of socio-economic and political development of the Horn of Africa.