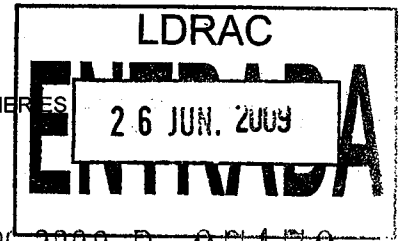




EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES
THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL



Brussels,
D(2009)

M. Antonio Schiappa Cabral
Long Distance RAC
C/ Velázquez 41, 4° C
28001 Madrid
SPAIN

Subject: LDRAC advice on piracy

Dear Mr. Cabral,

Thank you very much for your letter on piracy attacks against the EC fishing fleet in the Indian Ocean. EU institutions are acutely aware of this difficult situation.

The Fisheries Council on 24 April 2009 discussed the difficult situation of the EC tuna fishing fleet. In his intervention, Commissioner Borg stressed the importance of close cooperation between the fishing vessels and the EU's naval operation, EU NAVFOR Atalanta. It is of crucial importance that all fishing vessels in the risk area register with the Maritime Security Centre Horn of Africa website (MSCHOA, www.mschoa.eu) which is established and maintained by Operation Atalanta. Registration at this website is indeed one of the most effective ways to ensure safe navigation of any ship through the most dangerous parts, in conjunction with appropriate self protection measures.

As you are aware, Operation Atalanta falls under the remit of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and is therefore implemented by the Council Secretariat.

I understand that good communication lines have been established between the Operation and the tuna fishing associations. In addition to temporary representation of the fishing industry at the Operation Headquarters (OHQs) of Operation Atalanta, a Liaison Officer has been appointed at the OHQs to maintain constant communication with tuna fisheries. Your representatives have also met with the appropriate Council bodies to discuss the issue of the critical situation of the tuna fleet resulting from the increased piracy activity in Somali and adjacent waters and the converging migration patterns of the fish.

The recent developments regarding the decision to extend Atalanta's mandate and its area of action to the Seychelles should further improve protection in this area. A transfer agreement for apprehended pirates and subsequent prosecution is already in place with Kenya. Similar agreements are currently under discussion with other parties, including

the Seychelles, and should help offset the load of detained pirates awaiting judgment in Kenya.

The Commission is also assessing the roots of the escalation of piracy in the region, notably the political, economic and social situation in Somalia in order to address the piracy problem in the long term. Following the discussions at the Fisheries Council, Commissioner Borg and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner discussed the difficult situation of the EC fishing fleet in the Indian Ocean, including how this aspect could also be taken into consideration in relevant discussions in the CFSP fora of the Council.

I trust that the above demonstrates that your concerns are being taken into account by the appropriate EU structures. The safety of our fishermen is a matter of strong concern to the Commission and Commissioner Borg and I will continue to follow the matter personally.

Yours sincerely,



Fokion Fotiadis