

**22nd Plenary Session of the Contact Group on Piracy off the
Coast of Somalia (CGPCS)
Intercontinental Hotel, Balaclava
Thursday 20 June 2019 – 9 h 30**

**Speech by Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence and
Minister for Rodrigues**

**Honourable Ministers and members of the
National Assembly,
Honourable Ministers from countries
represented in the contact group on Piracy off
the Coast of Somalia,
Representatives of the United Nations,
Representatives of the European Union,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen
All Protocol observed**

Good morning to everybody

It is my pleasure to address you at this 22nd Plenary Session of the Meeting of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia.

This is an important meeting for us, one which will provide the opportunity to evaluate the current situation with regards to piracy in the Indian Ocean, to draw up the work plan for the current year and to reflect on the future of the Contact Group.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mauritius is very much concerned by the issue of maritime security in the Indian Ocean.

We know that the challenges of keeping our sea routes safe are multi-faceted and can only be addressed through a cooperation framework that involves international and regional actors.

Ten years after the existence of the Contact Group, we have to acknowledge our satisfaction that piracy has been drastically reduced. But it is not yet eradicated.

I would wish to place on record our appreciation for the collaborative efforts between the Indian Ocean Commission, Danish Shipping, the University of Copenhagen and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Denmark that enabled the good preparatory meeting for this 22nd Session.

I commend the prominent role played by the European Union which is funding the Maritime Security Programme being implemented by IGAD, EAC, COMESA and the IOC.

The IOC has embarked on a regional surveillance of Indian Ocean Fisheries and a comprehensive programme on Maritime Security. These also need to be commended.

However, in my view, it is important to establish a mechanism that will better coordinate our collective responses to maritime security and piracy.

I believe that the Indian Ocean Commission, as the Secretariat for the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia can play that role and should be strengthened to take such responsibility.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a fact that more than 90% of Africa's trade is seaborne. African Coastal States depend heavily on a secure maritime routes for the bulk of their trade.

From the Mozambican Canal to the Arabian Sea and the Malacca Straits, the coast line of the Indian Ocean is endowed with vast oil and gas deposits.

One-third of the world's maritime trade, half of which revolves around the transportation of petroleum products worldwide. 40% of global gas ply through the Indian Ocean.

Maritime schedules are worked out years in advance, so even a single incident of piracy or armed robbery, can impact negatively on trade.

It is therefore important that African countries combine their efforts to put in place common policies for ocean governance and national structures to facilitate coordination between States.

Maritime crimes in the last ten years have cost the Indian Ocean economies some \$ 13 billion. The lack of air surveillance and satellite imagery make tracking difficult.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the Indian Ocean, according to the FAO, contributes to a loss of about 400 million US Dollars a year at landing and 1 billion Dollars in processed products.

Drug trafficking, human trafficking and other terrorist risks have strong negative implications for our societies. We are all aware of how marine pollution and natural disaster risks are other threats which are severely impacting on our economies.

Whilst we are aware that no country alone can shield its maritime space on its own, we have not always been able to create the necessary synergies to face the challenges ahead.

The fight against piracy showed us that when the situation so demands, it is possible to successfully fight a scourge through united efforts.

We thus need to combine our efforts to keep seas safe. Let us remember that the seas are huge; fish are indifferent to any paper borders that may exist. Waste and other forms of pollution are also indifferent to maritime borders as a drift across the waters.

Oil and gas deposits straddle multiple territories.

The seas therefore should be the common concern of humanity.

It is time now to reinforce our cooperation so as to keep our seas in pristine condition. We welcome like-minded countries and organisations to join this Forum and look forward to working with them to advance our common endeavor.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Next year, we need to pitch our ambitions for this Maritime Security Conference higher by examining concrete projects that will bring countries together in action groups to address specific issue.

The outcome of these Action Groups should be our legacy of sustainability for future generation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The idea has been mooted for the organisation of a Maritime Security Summit.

With your assistance and support, we look forward to organize this Summit after the third edition of this Ministerial Conference.

On this note, I wish our partners and friends a pleasant stay in Mauritius.

I thank you for your kind attention.