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## Mobilise now to stabilise Somalia

The task is huge, but there is still hope for Somalia. We must work on land and on sea to tackle poverty and lawlessness

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Wednesday 12 August 2009 19.00 BST

Despite the renewed fighting in Somalia and the continuing fragility of its institutions, there is hope that the situation can change. There is a political process under way and the Transitional Federal Government, led by President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, has held since it was set up at the beginning of the year. This has provided a window of opportunity for the international community to tackle the lawlessness and violence plaguing Somalia and start stabilising the country.

The European Union has led the way with its anti-piracy naval taskforce, EU Navfor Atalanta, which was launched at the end of 2008 and has led to a reduction in successful pirate attacks. Now we are seeking to build on the success of Atalanta and act on land as well as at sea to eradicate piracy and help Somalia develop into a stable, functioning state that can offer a future for its people.

The task is huge and some would say it is almost impossible. But we must act and quickly. As long as Somalia remains fractured, violent, ungovernable and open to external interference, we are faced with growing regional instability, continuing piracy and an increasing risk of terrorism. We cannot act alone but we are willing to take the initiative and to work on all fronts, as part of the international community's effort.

The EU is already the world's biggest donor of humanitarian relief for the desperate victims of the conflict (€40m so far this year) and Operation Atalanta is ensuring that one and a half million mouths are fed each day by escorting World Food Programme ships safely along the coast of Somalia. On the economic and development front, the EU will also be supporting projects that build local capacities and create jobs and prospects for the people.

On the political front, we want to provide adequate support to a process that offers the best chance of reversing the downward spiral and stabilising Somalia. I admire the courage and tenacity of the Somali Transitional Federal Government. It is resolutely attempting, with very limited resources, to restore law and order in Somalia. The EU is ready and willing to help consolidate the legitimate institutions of the country, notably with financial support and training, including for the security institutions.

We are sustaining and indeed developing our naval engagement. We are justly proud of the success of Operation EU Navfor Atalanta, which, under the able leadership of the British operation commander, Admiral Peter Hudson, has brought a measure of security to the waters off the coast of Somalia. Since it was launched last December, there has been a tenfold fall in the probability of a successful pirate attack. Dozens of pirates have been captured and will stand trial in the region.

However, we cannot eradicate piracy if we do not attack its root causes, on land as well as at sea. This means attacking the dire poverty that deprives the people of alternative

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livelihoods and allows piracy to flourish. It also means building up the country's police and legal systems and its law courts and prison service so that the state can deal with the pirates, as well as the organised criminal networks and the terrorists that remain at large. We will work in co-ordination with the UN and the African Union, as well as other regional actors in Africa, to avoid duplicating and fragmenting the international community's efforts.

A crucial strand of our efforts will be to help Somalia develop a professional, well-equipped and trained national coastguard, capable of deterring pirate attacks and trafficking activities, including illegal fishing and the dumping of toxic waste. Other countries in the region, such as Kenya, Yemen, Djibouti and Tanzania, could also be included in programmes to support coastguard development.

Somalia also needs help in developing a national security force (army) and a Somali civilian police force. Here too, the EU can provide added value, with its expertise in security sector reform, training and mentoring.

We must also help to reinforce the international legal framework to tackle piracy. Where possible, pirates should be prosecuted and tried in the region where they are caught. The EU has already reached an agreement with Kenya to hand over pirates for prosecution and is working on a similar agreement with the Seychelles. But more such agreements are needed. At the same time, states in the region need assistance in building up their judicial and penitentiary capacity so that they have the means to prosecute, try and sentence pirates. Finally, we should also look at ways of choking off the flow of income to pirates, for example by seizing the proceeds of acts of piracy or armed robbery at sea, or prohibiting the payment of ransoms.

The task of rescuing Somalia is huge but we cannot afford to fail. We have made an impact with Operation Atalanta and we are now ready to move forward with a broader effort. We must mobilise now, while we have an opportunity.