

**Speech delivered by Mr. Eric VANHALEWYN,
First Secretary
European Union Delegation to the Republic of Mauritius**

*Meeting of Focal Points for Results 4 and 5 of the Programme to
Promote Regional Maritime Security*

31 March 2015, Gold Crest Hotel, Quatre Bornes, Mauritius

- The Secretary General of the Indian Ocean Commission,
Mr. Jean-Claude de l'Estrac,
- Representatives from the Government of Mauritius,
- Excellences and Colleagues of the Diplomatic Corps,
- Representatives of the Regional Organisations and
Countries of the Eastern and Southern Africa and Indian
Ocean region,
- Distinguished Guests,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am glad to be here today for the regional meeting of Focal Points under the MASE programme.

First let me thank the Indian Ocean Commission for organising this meeting. The MASE programme's main objective is to be the vector of regional ownership of maritime safety and is also an affirmation of the will of regional organisations to fight against maritime threats.

This meeting is very timely and significant. It will provide opportunities for focal points to learn about the latest developments in the MASE program but also to enhance strategic axes of cooperation among the states in the ESA - IO region and hence to further develop regional ownership and initiatives to fight against piracy.

The Indian Ocean Commission is entrusted with the challenging responsibility of carrying out activities related to results 4 and 5 under the MASE programme, dealing respectively with

- “Regional and national capacity for maritime tasks and support functions” and
- “Regional coordination and information exchange”.

Let me emphasise our appreciation for the dynamism shown by the Indian Ocean Commission especially concerning the creation of a regional centre for maritime information fusion.

It may be recalled that at the Moroni summit on the 23rd of August, 2014 the heads of state and government of the IOC expressed their “satisfaction with the coordination provided by the IOC concerning the setting up

- of a regional fusion centre with the aim of improving risk detection, and
- of a regional centre for the coordination of maritime activities to enable joint maritime operations to be implemented”.

It is true that piracy attacks are at their lowest level in six years. However, the fight against piracy is not yet won. Recognising that piracy is an international security challenge and considering what it has cost to the region, we must continue to work together to counter piracy at international, regional and national level and a comprehensive and integrated approach of the region is required to counter piracy and to mitigate the phenomenon in a sustainable way.

For this purpose, the time is ripe for the implementation of an operational coordination mechanism dedicated to the conduct of maritime operations planned in the result area 4 of the MASE program.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Following the recent African Union ministerial meeting on maritime safety and security that took place in, Seychelles, it is encouraging to observe that the European Union and the African Union converge in their respective approaches on integrated maritime security and recognition that maritime security is, not only a law enforcement and governance issue but also a critical precondition for unlocking the growth potential and the development of the economy.

Now, I would like to underline, that the EU support to maritime security comes in many forms.

The EU assumed the Presidency of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) in 2014. The EU is, with over 1.2 billion EUROS spent on development and capacity building, the largest donor in Somalia. The EU is also carrying out concurrently three missions under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in the Horn of Africa region and Western Indian Ocean, namely:

- the EUNAVFOR Atalanta operation,
- the regional maritime capacity building mission EUCAP Nestor, and
- the EU Training Mission in Somalia.

The EU is also financing several Critical Maritime Routes programmes under its Instrument for Stability.

More generally, the EU looks forward to working with all stakeholders in the region and with the international community to bring the fight against piracy off the coast of Somalia to an end.

But let's come back to this meeting of focal points which will be an opportunity to exchange views on important issues relating to the two outcomes of the MASE programme which would enhance your commitment and forge regional partnerships for improved maritime security.

Before I end, let me wish you fruitful deliberations for the meeting.

Thank you for your attention.