

Opening Remarks by

Dr. Monica K Juma, (Oxon), CBS

Cabinet Secretary for Defence of the Republic of

Kenya and Chairperson of the

Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia

(CGPCS)

Salutations;

Excellencies,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Esteemed Members of the Contact Group on Piracy off the

Coast of Somalia (CGPCS),

The Indian Ocean Commission and Secretariat of the CGPCS,

Distinguished Delegates,

I welcome you all to this first virtual meeting of Friends of the Chair on CGPCS, which I have the privilege to host. It gives me immense pleasure to be here today and e-meeting all of you 9 months after the Republic of Kenya assumed the role of Chair of the CGPCS and 7 months after the Handing over Ceremony. As we adapt to this new normal mode of work, I wish to convey to you all my sincere wishes for safety and appeal to your collective efforts to keep the virus under control.

Excellencies, Friends of the Chair;

Today's meeting is of utmost importance. As you are aware, this is the first time that we are meeting after the 22nd Plenary Session which was held back in June 2019 in Mauritius and I must say that we have a lot to catch up on.

As I am sure you have all familiarised yourselves with today's agenda, a key consideration will be the establishment of the Strategic Planning Steering Group (SPSG). As you would know, in the 22nd Plenary two key deliberations on the future for the CGPCS were the establishment of the SPSG and the future of the Counter Piracy Trust Fund. The SPSG has been canvassed as a measure to recalibrate and reinvigorate the work of the CGPCS after its ten

(10) years of existence. It offers the opportunity of reflecting on what has been achieved so far. The Terms of Reference of the SPSG were formulated and shared with you all. The comments that were received will form the basis of our discussions today and I hope that we reach consensus and successfully establish the SPSG to further develop a work plan that meets the very purpose of this initiative.

In this regard, I am very thankful to all those who have contributed to the Terms of Reference of the SPSG. I therefore call upon the Friends of Chair to finalize and approve the SPSG ToR as well as agree on the concrete next steps forward which could include the followings:

- **Set-up a committee of the SPSG, agree on who would lead the way forward – either secretariat or a CG member.**
- **The CGPCS Chair and Secretariat will of course provide all necessary support.**
- **Agree on the main elements of a “CGPCS Strategic Plan”**

The conclusion on our exchanges today will be submitted for consideration and approval in the 23rd Plenary Session

On the Trust Fund, I have held discussions to explore the possibilities of the extension of the United Nations Trust Fund (UNTF). The board of the Trust Fund most formally referred to as the **Counter Piracy Trust Fund Board** had decided in its meeting in January 2020 to close the Trust Fund by 31st December 2021 due to insufficient funds. I believe that the continued operationalization of the TF facilitates the continued momentum in combating piracy which we all agree is suppressed and not eradicated. The fund has engendered security in respondent areas and offered alternative livelihoods that contributed to the suppression of piracy as well as providing long term and sustainable alternatives to piracy. The establishment of a new board of the Counter Piracy Trust Fund is currently underway and I recall the Expressions of Interest by members in joining the board. Towards this end, I commend the volunteers Japan, Korea, Seychelles and Turkey, who have so far joined the Counter Piracy Trust Board (CPTB) and appeal for more support in this noble undertaking. I also wish to reiterate the need for the Contact Group to reflect on the modalities for the continuation of the activities which until now are undertaken within the Counter Piracy Trust Fund.

In addition, a main focus area of the CGCPS is the prosecution and conviction of pirates where concerns on premature release have been brought to our attention. I wish to reassure the International community that I am closely monitoring the situation and that this remains top of my Agenda in close collaboration with key stakeholders as there is a need to ensure that the mechanism for prosecuting pirates which took years to establish does not crumble down. It was in this spirit that as Chair in the month of August I issued a communiqué and I **reiterate my commitment to continue to pledge for the full implementation of the provisions of the Agreements among the concerned parties.**

The 22nd CGPCS Plenary session committed to have “*zero seafarers and zero ships in the hands of Somalia pirates*”. We should continue to strive to achieve this objective. I wish to express my extreme relief on the recent release of the three remaining Iranian hostages being held captive by Somalia pirates since 22 March 2015. I further wish to express our gratitude to the Hostage Support Partners as well as to the International Seafarers Welfare Assistance Network. Their continuous and much sought after

assistance provided through the **CGPCS Piracy Survivors Fund** is crucial in supporting financially families of hostages during difficult period and upon returning home.

Excellencies, Friends of the Chair;

In our meeting today, we will listen to the interventions from the EUNVAFOR/CMF, Stable Seas, UNODC and industry as well as CGCPS related working groups including the Law Enforcement Task Force and the Virtual Legal Forum. The CGPCS is thankful to your continued support and commitment in making sure we are up to date with the new trends of piracy, especially during this time of COVID-19. It is therefore crucial that we continue with our endeavour in ensuring that the ocean is safe.

I therefore encourage the Related Working Groups to continue collaborating with the CGPCS and also maintain a strong working relationship with the CGPCS Secretariat for updates.

Last but not least, I would like to re-iterate the commitment of the Republic of Kenya as Chair of the CGPCS in stepping up our efforts to ensure that the CGPCS remains an effective and agile

mechanism in addressing the challenge of piracy. Without your respective efforts, this goal would not be achieved. We must not forget that even though piracy is contained, it is not eradicated because its root causes are still prevalent.

In conclusion, to keep the CGCPS Momentum and consensus for yearly plenaries, I propose that the **23rd Plenary scheduled for** this year be held COVID pandemic notwithstanding. I therefore propose that the meeting be held before **the end of the year whether in the usual format with the physical presence of members or if the pandemic situation does not allow, via webinar. I also invite members to make proposals for agenda items.**

Excellencies, Friends of the Chair;

I therefore wish you all successful deliberations and look forward to some interesting outcomes of this meeting.

I thank you all for your attention.