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**ECSCA/ETF press release for the piracy hearing in the European Parliament of 12<sup>th</sup> October 2011**

## **Social partners call for ambitious, holistic and coordinated EU response to piracy**

**ECSCA and ETF welcome the initiative taken by MEPs Peter Van Dalen and Giorgos Koumoutsakos to relaunch the debate on piracy at EU level. The continued surge in pirate attacks calls for action both at sea and onshore. However, a holistic and coordinated approach should be taken in order to address diplomatic, military, trade and most importantly humanitarian concerns. The EU is in a unique position to do so. ECSCA and ETF, therefore, calls on the EU to adopt an ambitious and coordinated response to the fight against piracy.**

On 12<sup>th</sup> of October 2011, MEPs Peter Van Dalen (ECR, the Netherlands) and Georgios Koumoutsakos held a hearing in the European Parliament focusing on the threat of (Facing the Threat of Piracy). ECSCA (the European Community Shipowners' Association) and ETF (The European Transport Workers' Federation) very much welcome this timely initiative. Indeed, the past year has witnessed an increase in piracy and high-jacking attempts in an ever-growing area around the Gulf of Aden. Here, pirates are showing strong adaptation skills altering their modus operandi to increase their chances of success. Moreover, the approaching end of the monsoon season combined with the current humanitarian emergency in the Horn of Africa, are concrete elements most likely to worsen the situation.

Piracy is a complex problem. It is a multifaceted issue, which can only be resolved with a comprehensive and all-encompassing strategy onshore and at sea. ECSCA and ETF believe that the EU is uniquely placed to provide such a holistic approach. Indeed, the European Union is a well respected stakeholder in the region in military, diplomatic, trade and humanitarian terms. Few international organisations have such a scope of activities at their disposal. However, the EU seems to be suffering from a general lack of coordination when it comes to addressing piracy and the humanitarian challenges faced in the Horn of Africa.

ECSCA Secretary General Alfons Guinier said: "I strongly believe the EU could make a significant difference in the area, if its different services took a coordinated and concrete approach to piracy. This is not only a diplomatic or military issue, but first and foremost a humanitarian problem."

Maritime social partners have discussed piracy on numerous occasions in the framework of sectoral social dialogue and the issue was recently raised within DG MOVE's taskforce on Maritime Employment and Competitiveness. All agree that the long-term solution is ashore. However, in light of sustained attacks, the military presence in the area is imperative and the ATALANTA mission must be maintained with sufficiently robust rules of engagement. ECSCA and ETF, furthermore, call on measures to be taken to address the problem of states not willing to take action when piracy takes place in their jurisdiction, on their flagged vessels or affects their nationals.

ETF Spokesperson Mark Dickinson said "We need decisive interventions to defeat piracy and of course to protect the seafarers. The priority must be that the seafarers are not placed in harms way. The insurance, legal and liability questions therefore need resolving in the seafarers favour and governments must move quickly to resolve the impasse over the carriage of private and or public armed security guards and support the IMO's initiatives in this regard."

Social partners are ready to play their role in the fight against piracy and compliance with best management practices will continue to be supported and raised within ECSA and ETF membership, as requested by the taskforce on Maritime Employment and Competitiveness. Furthermore, both organisations hope that the EU will adopt an ambitious, holistic and coordinated response to the threat of piracy and offer their assistance in its development.

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