Press release | 23.03.2012

Somalia/piracy

Extending Atalanta mission a further step in the wrong direction

EU foreign ministers today agreed to prolong the EU's counter-piracy mission Atalanta in Somali waters. Commenting on the decision, **Reinhard Bütikofer** said:

"Extending the Atalanta mission involves huge risks, notably the high probability that EU military forces could be involved in causing civilian casualties or fatalities in Somalia. What EU foreign ministers simply call a more robust course of action could ultimately lead to a high intensity conflict between EU forces and armed groups that have nothing to do with piracy in the region.

"In advocating a military response, EU foreign ministers are downplaying the fact that pirates are criminals and not a military force. Shooting pirates on-land, when there is no immediate threat, raises major legal problems. What the EU should focus on is stronger support for the legal dimension of the fight against piracy in the region, which UN special advisor on piracy Jack Lang has been recommending since last year. By bringing pirates before strong and competent courts, instead of releasing the vast majority of them upon capture, the EU could indeed have a more efficient impact."

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Reinhard Bütikofer

Member

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