



CONTACT GROUP ON PIRACY OFF THE COAST OF SOMALIA COMMUNIQUE OF THE CHAIR

2 August 2019

PREMATURE RELEASE OF 19 CONVICTED PIRATES BY SOMALILAND AUTHORITIES

The CGPCS strongly condemns the premature release of 19 convicted Somali pirates ahead of the completing of their prison term. The CGPCS recalls its Communiqué of September 2018 in which it had expressed its strong opposition to the unilateral decision taken for the early release of convicted pirates. This act seriously undermines the collective action taken over the past ten years by the International Community, and which has led to the drastic reduction in acts of piracy off the coast of Somalia.

The decision to release these pirates contravenes the need for “*strict observance of the Transfer Agreement*” as per paragraph 11 of the Final Communiqué adopted by the **22nd CGPCS Plenary session** on the 20th June 2019. This act unequivocally breaches the *Memorandum of Understanding on Transfer of sentenced pirates with the Republic of Seychelles*”.

The CGPCS recalls that the prison sentence of pirates can be varied only following the joint approval of both arresting and convicting States. These convicted Somali Pirates were transferred into custody of the competent Somali authorities by the Republic of Seychelles in 2012. The untimely release of these prisoners is contrary to provisions of Articles 5 and 7.1 of the MoU signed by Seychelles and the competent authorities in Somaliland in the margins of the London Conference on Somalia in February 2012. This clearly compromises the agreed arrangements providing for the repatriation of such individuals to their home country to serve their sentence on a humanitarian basis.

The CGPCS calls for all pirates to serve their full term unless otherwise agreed upon by all concerned parties. The CGPCS fully supports the condemnation and censure by the Seychelles of the release of sentenced pirates.

The CGPCS is of the view that this condemnable act of release jeopardizes regional and international efforts to combat piracy, its root causes and the reinforcement of safety and security in the Western Indian Ocean. The CGPCS reiterates that the arrest, prosecution and imprisonment; cooperation with Naval Forces off the coast of Somalia and involvement of regional and international organizations as well as the contribution with and within the Shipping Industry are important deterrence mechanisms in the fight against piracy and related crimes.

The CGPCS Chair calls on the United Nations Secretary General to inform the United Nations Security Council about the above developments.

Port Louis, Mauritius
2 August 2019