

H.E. Gilles Gauthier, Ambassador of France to Sana'a

Excellencies,

As a dialogue partner, France is very pleased to be with you at that council of Ministers to share views on the several topics on your agenda. We would like to congratulate the Islamic Republic of Iran for its very active Presidency and have already exchange through the channel of our special representative based in Mauritius, on several issues with the new Executive Director M. Morteza Sarmadi. I seize this occasion to warmly praise his predecessor M. Samsudeen. My thanks are especially directed to the new Yemeni Presidency for the very efficient organization of this event and the support provided to our delegation.

As I mentioned we have shared our views with the Executive Director on several issues that were on our agenda in preparation of this meeting. We paid a special attention on two specific domains: fisheries and natural disaster risk management. On these two subjects and others, the local authorities from the French region La Reunion will receive with a great attention requests to send experts to technical meetings.

Our interest for these subjects is clearly linked with the fact that France has maritime borders in the Indian Ocean. We of course share same concerns with all the countries represented here. We are indeed part of that region and therefore, we might well in the future apply for full membership. If so, it would be much easier for us to mobilize financial support and human resources for projects managed by IOR-ARC. Our actual status does not allow us to have a sufficient say on their development.

For the time being, our activities in the region are focused on the Indian Ocean Commission area, which we chair this year.

We nevertheless are also very much involved in the region at large into the challenges of fighting piracy. France was first to help by November 2007, the Food World Program to military secure the delivering of humanitarian aid to Somalia. Our forces carried actions against pirate attacks on French boats and we felt necessary to have appropriate Security Council resolutions on that problem which reached a peak in 2008 with 168 attacks and 43 captures. On December of that year, the European Union launched the so-called Atalanta Naval Operation (13 ships, 3 planes, 1200 military personnel) to which we strongly participate.

It was recently decided to extend Atalanta operation for one more year. Results are good: Atalanta secured the two thirds of the maritime traffic in the gulf and all the World Food Program ships could deliver food to the Somalian population.

These measures are not sufficient. Atalanta is now promoting a more integrated policy in three major points in order to:

- enhance operational cooperation with 9 non European countries and two other initiatives: *NATO naval intervention* and the US lead coalition *Combined Task Forces 151*
- sign judicial agreements to deal with captured pirates: one was signed with Kenya and another one with Seychelles
- reinforce the national coastal guard forces in the region and consolidate the Somalian State. Capacity building operations will include the formation by France of a Somalian battalion.

Atalanta cannot face itself this challenge without increasing the capacity of the coastal countries to protect their territorial water. That goal cannot be reached without international cooperation.

We thank Yemen for its efforts in this field.

I very warmly thank the Yemeni Presidency for the occasion I was given to address this forum.