



United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS)

For Immediate Release

**PRESS RELEASE 0025/2008**

**Nairobi, 29 September 2008** – The UN Special Representative for Somalia, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, has once again warned that Somali pirates continue to pose a serious threat to free maritime trade, free navigation and international security. The Horn of Africa has been particularly badly affected.

Mr Ould Abdallah was speaking after a Ukrainian ship carrying heavy military equipment and other arms was seized by pirates.

He pointed out that piracy has become a multi-million dollar business attracting many Somalis using various political or social covers for their illegal activities. An increasing number of groups have moved into this lucrative business and invested heavily in it. The pirates are well funded and have all the latest equipment, including satellite phones which they use to communicate with their backers inland.

“There is a striking similarity between the actions of these unscrupulous pirates and the activity in ‘blood diamonds’ in Liberia and Sierra Leone during the civil wars in these countries,” he said.

Increased piracy has become a new scourge in the region already deeply affected by wars, irregular migration and other forms of trafficking.

“No ship, big or small, industrial or commercial, civil or military is spared. With the seizure of the Ukrainian ship a new line has been crossed. This act should not and will not be rewarded,” warned Mr Ould-Abdallah. “This is sadly not the first time I am drawing attention to this problem.

He said that as a consequence of piracy, the price of insurance and subsequently retail prices in the whole region have increased. Along with the sharp rise in the cost of oil and food, this makes life even harder for the poor, not only in Somalia, but in other countries in the region such as Djibouti, Ethiopia Kenya, Yemen etc.

Mr Ould-Abdallah called on the media to treat the pirates' actions as unlawful activities and use the same judgment as they would in other regions of the world. He said journalists should not allow themselves to be used to broadcast messages from the pirates or help glorify their actions.

He also said he had called a meeting this week of Ambassadors from all affected countries to prepare a response adding that the time has come to implement UN Resolution 1816 on piracy.

“The international community is determined to stop these pirates who are undermining efforts to bring peace to Somalia and maintain stability in the region. This can not and will not be allowed to continue.”

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