

UN Security Council could end Somalia anti-piracy resolution

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The UN Security Council was reported to be preparing to officially bring to a formal end its mission for international naval forces fighting piracy off the Somali Coast in East Africa, which has been in force for more than a decade.

The Security Council has voted to reauthorize the mission for only a further three months. It cautioned that proper mechanisms needed to be in place to ensure that there would not be a resurgence in activity.

While the Council members recognized that there had been a steady decline in attacks and hijackings since 2011 and noting that piracy off the coast of Somalia had been “repressed,” members of the Security Council said that the ongoing threat of resurgence remained.

The UN adopted its first resolution to fight Somali piracy nearly 15 years ago, with the EU, US, and other naval forces launching a coordinated effort in the region in December 2008. The Security Council has continued to reauthorize the mission annually, despite the decline in activities.

During the debate on reauthorization the Security Council acknowledged that there had been no successful hijackings for ransom reported since March 2017. The Council commended the broad naval coalition and efforts of the African Union for their counter-piracy activities.

Somali representatives speaking before the Security Council said that they believed the time had come to end the UN efforts and restore sovereignty to their waters. Somalia’s UN Ambassador Abukar Dahir Osman told the council that “we believe that the Security Council resolutions on piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia have successfully achieved its intended objective.”

However, permanent members of the Security Council said in opposition that the mission remained a critical deterrent. The US, which sponsored this year's resolution, objected to efforts to end the resolution. France spoke of a potential "security vacuum". It did not believe that three months provided sufficient time to ensure a long-term structure to maintain stability in the region.

In its three-month extension statement, the UN Council called upon all states to "take appropriate actions...to prevent the illicit financing of acts of piracy and the laundering of its proceeds...[and] to criminalize piracy under their domestic law."

The Council also called on Somalia to bring to justice those using Somali territory to launch the attacks. Among the efforts that the Security Council called for from Somalis was to put in place mechanisms to return effects seized by pirates and to patrol the coastal waters to prevent and suppress future acts of armed robbery at sea.

The Security Council said it expected to continue the discussions with Somalia and that it would also be looking for further resolution with the African Union to ensure that a long-term structure was in place for the stability of the region. Somalia has proposed bilateral agreements, starting in 2022, to replace the broader UN Security Council resolutions.