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Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

London SW1A 2AH

*From The Minister of State*

Lord Hannay of Chiswick  
Chair UNA-UK  
3 Whitehall Court  
London  
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Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of 26 September, which covered one to the Secretaries of State for Defence, International Development and Transport.

We are concerned by the increasing incidents of piracy in and around Somali waters. We continue to play a leading role in efforts to address this problem by working with our European Union and NATO partners to consider options to counter piracy directly, as well as continuing to support measures to undermine piracy at its roots on land in Somalia. In support of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1816, the EU established a cell in Brussels to co-ordinate EU activity in the region. I can also confirm that we are working actively with EU partners to launch a military counter piracy operation, and the EU is agreed that this should be co-ordinated closely with existing regional military activity, such as the Combined Task Force (CTF) 150 based in Bahrain. NATO has now also agreed as an interim measure to provide a number of ships from the Alliance's Standing Naval Maritime Group to patrol the waters off the coast of Somalia and escort ships carrying food supplied for the World Food Programme.

We recognise that UNSCR 1816 expires in December. As its co-sponsor, we support proposals to extend its mandate. In addition, we supported the new (UNSCR) 1838 adopted on 7 October, which aims to strengthen the international community's response to piracy.

The threat to shipping lanes and seafarers of all nationalities continues to be a concern for us. I believe that the measures I've described above, coupled with continuing close adherence by merchant shipping to the guidance which is issued to them, will help to reduce the vulnerability of international shipping to pirate attacks.

Yours ever  
Mark

The Rt Hon Lord Malloch-Brown  
Minister of State