**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**REMARKS TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL HIGH-LEVEL OPEN DEBATE ON MARITIME SECURITY**

**New York, 20 May 2025**

**[all-English]**

I thank the presidency of Greece for convening today’s open debate on the importance of strengthening maritime security through international cooperation.

This debate underscores first of all that the basic condition to preserve maritime security is the respect by all countries of the UN Charter and international law as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Mr. President,

From time immemorial, maritime routes have bound the world together.

They have long been the primary means for the trade and transport of not only people, goods and commodities, but also cultures and ideas.

All of humanity depends on the world’s oceans and seas — from the oxygen we breathe, to the biodiversity that sustains all life, to the economies, trade and jobs supported by maritime industries.

Today’s debate shines a light on a fundamental fact:

Without maritime security, there can be no global security.

But maritime spaces are increasingly under strain from both traditional threats and emerging dangers.

From challenges around contested boundaries…

To the depletion of natural resources at sea…

To escalating geopolitical tensions fanning the flames of competition, conflict and crime.

Over the years, this Council has sought to address a range of threats that undermine maritime security and global peace.

From piracy, armed robbery, trafficking and organized crime…

To destructive acts against shipping, offshore installations and critical infrastructure…

To terrorism in the maritime domain, which poses a significant threat to international security, global trade and economic stability.

No region is spared.

And the problem is getting worse.

After a modest global decrease in reported piracy and armed robbery incidents in 2024, the first quarter of 2025 saw a sharp upward reversal.

According to the International Maritime Organization, reported incidents rose by nearly half — 47.5 per cent compared to the same period in 2024.

Incidents in Asia nearly doubled — especially in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore.

In the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, attacks by the Houthis on commercial vessels have disrupted global trade and increased tensions in an already volatile region.

The Gulf of Aden and the Mediterranean Sea remain treacherously active routes for migrant smuggling and the trafficking of weapons and human beings.

The Gulf of Guinea continues to grapple with piracy, kidnappings, armed robbery at sea, oil theft, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and the illicit trafficking of drugs, weapons, and people.

Heroin from Afghanistan continues to reach East Africa through the Indian Ocean.

Cocaine moves through the coasts of the Western Hemisphere and across the Atlantic Ocean to West Africa and European ports.

And cyber-attacks are a fast-emerging security threat for ports and shipping companies.

Facing these and other threats, the world’s maritime routes and the people depending on them are sending a clear SOS.

Mr. President,

Across the UN system, our agencies are supporting many regional initiatives that are gathering partners around maritime security across the globe.

This includes initiatives to address insecurity from the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, to the Gulf of Guinea and the Persian Gulf.

It includes efforts to ensure safe navigation in the Black Sea.

It includes our work to help countries build strong maritime forces and legal systems.

It includes efforts to tackle armed robbery against ships in Asia, and fight piracy off the coast of Somalia.

It includes our support of the Yaoundé Architecture for Maritime Security — an interregional, multi-level coordination mechanism to counter piracy in West and Central Africa — which has seen a decline in piracy from 81 incidents in 2020 to just 18 last year.

And the International Maritime Organization continues to play a fundamental role in de-escalating tensions at sea and bringing together Member States and the shipping industry to find solutions.

Looking ahead, action is needed in three key areas.

First — respect for international law.

Respect for international law is the anchor of maritime security.

The international legal regime for maritime security — with the UN Charter and the Convention on the Law of the Sea at its core — strikes a careful balance between States’ sovereign rights, jurisdictions and freedoms, and their duties and obligations.

And it provides a strong cooperative framework for addressing crimes at sea and ensuring accountability.

However, this framework is only as strong as States’ commitment to full and effective implementation.

All States must live up to their obligations.

And they must resolve any differences in relation to maritime security in accordance with the UN Charter.

Second — we need to intensify efforts to address the root causes of maritime insecurity.

Threats to maritime security cannot be addressed without also addressing issues like poverty, a lack of alternative livelihoods, insecurity, and weak governance structures.

Across the United Nations family, we’re working with impoverished coastal communities to develop new opportunities for decent and sustainable work.

Collectively, we must do more to reduce the likelihood that desperate people will turn to crime and other activities that threaten maritime security and degrade our ocean environment.

We must help developing countries build their capacity to deal with these threats through technology, training, capacity-building, judicial reforms, and modernized naval forces, marine police units, maritime surveillance and port security.

And we need to ensure that our oceans and seas can continue thriving, and support humanity’s economic, social, cultural and environmental development for generations to come.

The upcoming Oceans Conference in Nice will provide an important moment for the countries of the world to take action.

And third — throughout, we need partnerships.

We must involve everyone with a stake in maritime spaces.

From coastal communities to governments and regional groups.

To shipping companies, flag registries, the fishing and extraction industries, insurers and port operators.

To this very Council, which has drawn attention to maritime security and the need for collective action, de-escalation, and cooperation.

And to civil society groups focused on women and girls, who are disproportionately affected by challenges like piracy and human trafficking.

As threats to maritime security are becoming more complex and interconnected, enhanced coordination and stronger maritime governance are essential.

Mr. President,

The UN system stands ready to continue to support this Council and all Member States in ensuring peaceful, secure and prosperous maritime spaces for generations to come.

Let’s take action to support and secure maritime spaces, and the communities and people counting on them.

Thank you.