

# The EU putting civil-military cooperation in practise in the Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa is an area of intensive maritime trade, as well as a centre of migratory routes towards Europe. For the EU, cooperation with the regional countries leading to more security and stability is thus of great importance. This is why the EU deploys a naval military operation off the coast of Somalia and, onshore in Somalia, a military and a civilian mission.



Different tasks, one common objective: The EU putting civil-military cooperation in practice in the Horn of Africa. Source: APO

Following the EU's integrated approach, all activities are conducted in close coordination with other EU activities such as development cooperation, humanitarian aid, trade or diplomacy as well with other national, regional or international partners.

The Horn of Africa is situated in the easternmost part of the African continent and is of strategic importance to a number of external actors, including the European Union. The EU currently conducts a military training mission (EUTM Somalia) and a civilian capacity-building mission (EUCAP Somalia) as well as a military naval operation called 'Atalanta', safeguarding waters in the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean.

Piracy off the coast of Somalia developed as a serious threat to international shipping some ten years ago. At the same time, foreign ships took advantage of the absence of an effective national Somali coast guard to illegally exploit fishing grounds. Partly in reaction to declining fish stocks, local Somali communities, in need of other sources of income, formed armed groups to hijack commercial vessels. What started in part as a response against foreign vessels fishing in the waters of Somalia quickly grew into an extremely lucrative trade due to the prospects of large ransom payments.

## **What are the objectives of the EU missions and operations?**

The three CSDP missions and operations have different tasks but follow one goal: building lasting stability in Somalia and the region.

While the military training mission (EUTM Somali) directly supports the build-up of the Somali National Army (SNA) through training, advising and mentoring activities, the civilian mission (EUCAP Somalia) improves Somalia's maritime security capacities. This includes among other things giving advice on how to reform and modernise the legislative framework including for example on the Somali National Coast Guard, on Fisheries or Anti-Piracy.

Furthermore, the mission is involved in the drafting of national policies and strategies, including the National Security Plan, the draft National Maritime Threat Assessment, draft Somaliland Coast Guard Joint Action Plan, and the Puntland State Police Plan.

The EU naval operation Atalanta (EU NAVFOR) continues to contribute to deterring and repressing acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea. But it also contributes to the prevention of other crimes through information exchange with military and law enforcement partners, including Europol and Interpol.

The operation also protects vulnerable shipping, in particular, vessels of the World Food Programme (WFP) delivering humanitarian assistance including for the EU to Somalia. More than 1.8 million tonnes of food aid have been safely delivered to the Somali ports to date.

EU NAVFOR also monitors fishing activities and cooperates with DG MARE, the European Commission Directorate-General responsible for EU policy on maritime affairs and fisheries.

Keeping in mind that one of the root causes of piracy in the Horn of Africa is the lack of a legal and operational security framework and large-scale overfishing, it is clear that only a combination of measures is needed to tackle factors effectively.

Establishing local ownership through capacity and capability building of national security forces is a core element of any EU action. The training of national security forces is important for internal stability and goes hand in hand with the mission's work on the development and drafting of the Somali National Defence Strategy, together with the Somali Ministry of Defence and the Somali National Army.

At the same time, the civilian mission builds up maritime police forces and the national coast guard also in line with drafted legislation and policies. It furthermore addresses issues such as maritime situational awareness. At the same time operation, Atalanta provides information on criminal activities at sea allowing Somalian authorities to take actions, e.g. in the case of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

## **Who are these European soldiers and experts?**

The decision to establish and to launch any EU mission or operation, military or civilian, abroad under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) always requires the approval of all EU Member States through a Council Decision. It is then also up to the Member States to contribute by providing the necessary assets and personnel required for the military or civilian missions and operations (e.g. soldiers, lawyers, experts on security sector reform, coast guards, etc.).

In the case of Somalia and the Horn of Africa, a total number of 23 EU Member States as well as third countries such as Serbia and Montenegro decided to send civilian experts and soldiers from their national armed forces to serve under an EU flag.

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