

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001436/24
to the Commission
Anna Maria Cisint (Pfe)
(26 July 2024)**

Subject: Urgent measures to restore Mediterranean maritime traffic to normal and support Italian supply chains impacted by Houthi attacks

The escalation in attacks by the Houthis has triggered an emergency in vital sectors of the economy in Italy and in other Mediterranean countries. Since November 2023, the volume of trade transiting the Suez Canal has halved (-56.1%) and Mediterranean ports geared to exporting to the east — in particular Trieste, Venice and Ravenna — have suffered as a result. Supply chains have also been hard hit, and especially those involving small and medium-sized enterprises based in Italy, whose share of direct manufacturing exports to non-EU countries is 32.7% of the European total. There has also been a 33% drop in agricultural exports to Asia and Oceania, while EUR 6 billion's worth of Italian-manufactured products remain this side of the Suez.

Given these circumstances, can the Commission state what action it will take, without further ado and at all international levels, to restore Mediterranean maritime traffic to normal, given that it would be a fundamental strategic error to allow this temporary problem to trigger an imbalance between the development of ports in northern Europe and those in southern Europe, which would be detrimental to the operation of those ports and to manufacturing and agricultural supply chains.

Submitted: 26.7.2024

**Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Borrell i Fontelles on behalf of the European Commission
(7 October 2024)**

The EU has repeatedly condemned ⁽¹⁾ the Houthi threats and attacks against commercial ships, including the illegal seizure of the 'Galaxy Leader' vessel and its 25-member crew, as unacceptable violations of international law threatening maritime security, peace and stability in the region.

The EU underlined that they must stop, notably through the High Representative/Vice-President's (HR/VP) declaration on behalf of the EU and its Member States of 12 January 2024 ⁽²⁾, welcoming the 10 January 2024 United Nations Security Council resolution 2722 ⁽³⁾ condemning the Houthi attacks.

On 19 February 2024, the EU deployed its Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) ASPIDES ⁽⁴⁾ in the Red Sea, with a mandate to protect ships under attack, accompany vessels and reinforce maritime situational awareness, in cooperation with partners.

Over the last six months of deployment, EUNAVFOR ASPIDES has contributed to uphold the freedom of navigation in the Red Sea and beyond by protecting more than 220 merchant vessels during their transits under missiles and drones threats.

In addition, it has established in a record time a network of cooperation with the shipping industry. The decision to sail back in the Red Sea is taken by private actors based on their evaluation of the risk analysis between costs and dangers.

⁽¹⁾ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/ep-plenary-speech-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-houthi-attacks-red-sea_en

⁽²⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/01/12/yemen-statement-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-welcoming-the-un-security-council-resolution-strongly-condemning-houthi-attacks-on-red-sea-shipping/>. See also the EU Spokesperson's statements of 5 and 13 December 2023: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/yemen-statement-spokesperson-houthi-attacks-red-sea_en, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/yemen-statement-spokesperson-houthi-attacks-ships-red-sea_en

⁽³⁾ <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2722>

⁽⁴⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2024/583/oj>