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Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas
on behalf of the European Commission
(10.2.2025)

On 19 February 2024, the EU deployed its Naval Force Operation EUNAVFOR ASPIDES in the Red Sea, with a mandate to protect ships under attack, to accompany vessels and to reinforce maritime situational awareness, in cooperation with international partners. Between 19 February 2024 and 19 January 2025, EUNAVFOR ASPIDES has contributed to uphold the freedom of navigation in the Red Sea and beyond by protecting and monitoring more than 500 merchant vessels and their crews 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.

Over 2024, more than 25 meetings in Brussels and more than 8 trips to the region ensured that the activities of the operation were understood by EU partners and that the defensive posture would fit in the complex regional environment. The diplomatic outreach has facilitated the political regional buy-in, the necessary daily logistics and the informal clearance of ad hoc access to partners' infrastructures in case of emergency. When the Houthis hit MV Sounion, risking a large oil spill, the European External Action Service reached out to all regional actors to allow the removal of the vessel and avoid a major environmental catastrophe.

The Commission provides maritime surveillance and situational awareness services through the integrated maritime services hosted by the EU Maritime Safety Agency. These efforts support the ongoing monitoring of safety, security, and pollution prevention in the affected areas. Additionally, the Commission closely monitors economic impacts, such as increased rerouting costs and reduced traffic to Mediterranean ports and stays in close contact with relevant industry stakeholders.