

WRITTEN QUESTION E-4436/07

by Rosa Miguélez Ramos (PSE) and Josu Ortuondo Larrea (ALDE)
to the Commission

Subject: Safety of Community vessels fishing off the coast of Somalia

Incidents of piracy occurring off the coast of Somalia are continuing to affect Community fishing vessels that operate there in order to catch highly migratory species such as the bonito. According to the International Maritime Organization, Somali waters are among the most dangerous in the world.

There are currently 27 Spanish tuna boats in the area, along with other vessels, the nationality of which we cannot say. Although they are fishing many miles off the coast, several vessels have been attacked by armed men on speedboats, creating a dangerous situation for their crews.

In its answer to Written Question E-4780/05, the Commission observed that 'Somalia was clearly unable to police its coastline owing to the fragility of the transitional government and the lack of resources'. There is no fishing agreement between the EU and Somalia, because there is no administrative structure that could operate the relevant cooperation mechanisms. This in turn means that Community fishing activity in these waters does not fall within the Community's legal framework and the Commission cannot ensure the safety of European fishermen.

However, given that the Commission undertook in its answer to endeavour to solve the problem by supporting those institutions working to rebuild the security sector and that warships from some Member States operate in the area to assist and protect their fishermen:

Would the Commission be willing to promote and coordinate some kind of system of mutual assistance, together with the governments of the Member States concerned, to ensure that those warships in situ also support, through their presence, fishing vessels from other Member States?