

**Question for written answer P-002687/2019
to the Commission**
Rule 138
Kris Peeters (PPE)

Subject: Communication of distress signals and information to rescue ships and other vessels

According to the Belgian newspaper De Standaard of 7 September 2019¹, the vessel the Ocean Viking did not receive any information from the EU on refugee boats in distress. Coast guards remained silent, too.

High Representative Mogherini stated in response that information is transmitted immediately to the coastguard body responsible for informing nearby ships and coordinating any rescue operations. Search and rescue operations are not one of Operation Sophia's core activities.'

1. Pursuant to Article 98(1) and (2) of UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea), both ships and coastal states have a 'duty to render assistance'. The International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR) refers, in that respect, to 'other vessels navigating in the area'. Were these conventions complied with in the above-mentioned case?

2. When a European agency such as Frontex detects persons in distress, is there not an ensuing duty to share any information that could speed up the rescue? Does this not also extend to nearby NGO vessels that explicitly request information?

3. Neither drones and aircraft nor EU agencies are explicitly mentioned in UNCLOS or SAR. Do the Commission and its agencies consider themselves bound by UNCLOS and SAR or the customary international law that inspired these conventions?

¹ https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20190906_04595836