

Question for written answer

E-002486-19

to the Commission (Vice-President/High Representative)

Rule 138

Julie Lechanteux (ID)

Subject: VP/HR — Shipping safety in the Strait of Hormuz

The crisis in the Strait of Hormuz is a dangerous development as regards both the geopolitical situation in the region and maritime security, especially as 20% of the world's oil, and 30% of LPG, is transported through the area.

The situation has steadily worsened since the British tanker Stena Impero was seized on 19 July 2019 in retaliation at the seizure by the Gibraltar authorities of the Iranian vessel Grace I.

The Lloyd's Market Association's Joint War Committee¹, which brings together over 80 companies and controls one fifth of shipping insurance policies, has taken formal steps to add the Persian Gulf to the list of areas at risk of war.

The USA is in the process of mounting Operation Sentinel, an international maritime effort, and is calling for European partners to get involved².

Given her powers in the area of common security and defence (under Articles 42 to 46 of Title V, Chapter 2, Section 2 of the Treaty on European Union, as well as Protocols Nos 1, 10 and 11, and Declarations 13 and 14, annexed thereto), and with a view to guaranteeing the safety of shipping, could the Vice-President/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy state the EU's position on this matter?

¹ <http://www.lmalloyds.com/lma/jointwar>

² <https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/STATEMENTS/Statements-View/Article/1911282/us-central-command-statement-on-operation-sentinel/>

EN

E-002486/2019

Answer given by Vice-President Mogherini
on behalf of the European Commission
(17.9.2019)

The High Representative/Vice-President (HR/VP) spokesperson reacted swiftly to the seizure by Iranian authorities of two ships on 19 July 2019 in a statement expressing the EU's concern vis-à-vis rising tensions and potential escalation, and recalling the need for the principles enshrined in the Law of the Sea to be respected, in particular with regard to freedom of navigation. Those principles are referred to in the EU Maritime Security Strategy (2014)¹(1) and the EU Global Strategy (2016)²(2).

The European External Action Service is following closely the different diplomatic initiatives aiming at ensuring freedom of navigation in the strait, which is of strategic importance for security of energy supply. Coordination between such initiatives is of utmost importance.

The HR/VP continues to engage with countries in the region on regional dialogue mechanisms. The objective is to help building confidence between regional actors, to reduce tensions more generally and to address the broader set of challenges facing the region, including maritime safety besides maritime security.

The EU is currently using diplomatic tools to lower the level of geopolitical tensions and contribute to the rule-based-order at sea, based on maritime multilateralism as well as respect for the rule of law.

¹ EU Maritime Security Strategy.

² EU Global Strategy.