

EVENT REPORT

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New Delhi Inaugural Meeting of Oceans Beyond Piracy- India Flags Issues of Shared Concern to South Asia

There is an urgent need to reassess the risk criteria for piracy in the Indian Ocean and to ensure the safety of seafarers with streamlined operational responses. These were the primary conclusions of the Oceans Beyond Piracy – India (OBP-I) inaugural in New Delhi on 18 November 2011. Hosted by OBP-I Chairman, Vice-Admiral (retd) Pradeep Kaushiva, the two day event was attended by maritime experts, representatives from the shipping industry, academia, security establishment and the media. The Naval Adviser of Pakistan and the Defence Attaches of Brazil and Italy were among the guests along with members of diplomatic community from Sri Lanka and Maldives. The inaugural was held on premises at the Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, a leading Asian think tank on matters of national and international security.

Vice Admiral (retd) Arun Kumar Singh, Former Commander in Chief of the Andaman and Nicobar Command, delivered the keynote address on “Meeting the Challenge of Maritime Piracy in 21st Century.” Chief of the Bangladesh Maritime Cell in the Ministry of External Affairs, Rear Admiral Khurshed Alam, the just retired Director-General of Sri Lanka Coast Guard Rear Admiral Daya Dharmapriya and the Deputy High Commissioner of the Maldives, Khadeeja Ibrahim were also the headline speakers. Issue specific discussions were led by Dr. PK Ghosh from the Observer Research Foundation, Dr. Vijay Sakhuja of the Indian Council of World Affairs and Commodore Seshadri Vasan of Chennai Center for Asia Studies. “India’s Response to Piracy 2010-2011: A Reference Paper” was circulated at the inaugural to highlight India’s multi-dimensional approach in moving from a largely reactive to a proactive role within the last two years.

The issues that got flagged for new initiatives included:

- Shifting counter-piracy efforts from naval operations to law enforcement with more active Coast Guards.
- Standardizing and updating national anti-piracy laws
- Promoting investment to prevent “at risk” populations from turning to piracy.
- Gaining better understanding of the factors that determine high risk insurance Areas.
- Exploring possibilities for more direct involvement of the United Nations.
- Ensuring protection of seafarer’s through greater flag state accountability.
- Streamlining decision making processes for decisive action against pirated vessels.

OBP-India is envisioned to contribute to the global counter-piracy efforts by encouraging action driven projects to reduce the incidence or severity of piracy activity in the Indian Ocean. Towards that end, OBP-India will promote forward thinking strategies to generate an educated public response and multi-stakeholder support from leaders in maritime security and maritime industry.

The OBP-I web-site (www.india.oceansbeyondpiracy.org) will carry the text of the statements and presentation of the inaugural in the next update, and publish unfolding plans of action by OBP-India as a first of its kind initiative facilitated by One Earth Future Foundation.

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