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NEWS RELEASE

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-- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE --

International Maritime Experts Call for Better Coordinated Counter-Piracy Messaging

LONDON, UK – February 17, 2012 – The Oceans Beyond Piracy (OBP) Project, a privately funded initiative based in Denver Colorado, hosted a Somali counter-piracy messaging workshop in London on February 15-16 that was co-sponsored with the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the United States Department of State. The event brought together more than 50 counter-piracy experts representing governments, international organizations, naval forces, the shipping industry and seafarer groups to develop more effective Somali counter-piracy messaging strategies. The participants emphasized the importance of identifying and de-conflicting the myriad messaging efforts through better international coordination. The workshop mapped current and planned counter-piracy messaging initiatives – and over 30 distinct programs were identified. Participants therefore called for the harmonization of strategic messaging and to further develop effective Somali counter-piracy messaging practices that will feed into the ongoing work of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) as the key international forum to help harmonize the multitude of Somali counter-piracy messaging efforts; and will complement the London Conference on Somalia to be held on Thursday, which will bring together more than 50 countries and international organizations to agree a new action-oriented approach to the issues facing Somalia. The group also developed recommendations for ways to enhance cooperation and coordination through the leadership of CGPCS Working Group 4, chaired by Ambassador Ashraf Mohsen of Egypt, who attended the workshop.

In a public event held to discuss the results, the group emphasized the crucial role of messaging and public diplomacy as key components in a comprehensive approach to address the problem of Somali piracy. According to Anna Bowden from Oceans Beyond Piracy, media messaging is an important part of making the public understand the sizable human and economic costs associated with piracy. “We have documented that piracy cost industry and governments almost \$7 Billion last year – but the real story is that 99% of these costs are not invested in a sustainable solution and must be paid every year until the piracy threat is significantly reduced.”

James Hughes, Chair of CGPCS Working Group 1 and Deputy Head of Security Policy at the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, attended the public event following the workshop and commented that, “This was an important, well-timed, event, given its proximity to the London Conference on Somalia. Coordinated messaging is a key part of a comprehensive international approach to countering piracy, which in itself needs to be seen as part of a comprehensive approach to the issues facing the people of Somalia.”

For more information about the conference or the Oceans Beyond Piracy Project, contact Jens V. Madsen (+1 303.709.4776) or Anna Bowden (+1 303.709.5498).

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Oceans Beyond Piracy (OBP) is a project of One Earth Future Foundation (OEF). OEF is a private foundation located near Denver, Colorado in the United States, which is committed to multi-stakeholder initiatives to resolve issues related to conflict. OBP encourages close cooperation across the international maritime community to develop long-term, sustainable solutions to piracy. More information can be found at: www.oceansbeyondpiracy.org