



## Rear Admiral (LH) Ettore SOCCI

### Force Commander Farewell End of tour as first Force Commander in Operation IRINI 18 October 2020

If you had asked me at the beginning of my mandate what my last day as Force Commander would have been, I would not have imagined anything like this.

Nevertheless, the challenges we are called to face today, as citizens and as soldiers, oblige us to continuously and carefully monitor not only the effectiveness of our actions but also our organization's resilience, flexibility and ability to react quickly and to adapt to new scenarios.

My farewell message today will not mention statistics and results but will address people.

After more than 17 months spent as Force Commander, the last one in Operation SOPHIA and the first one in Operation IRINI, my mind goes quickly through the nearly 500 days I spent serving the European Union in a CSDP maritime security operation.

First of all, I would like to express my **sincere gratitude** to those who gave me the opportunity to assume the relevant role of Force Commander: my **national chain of command** - starting from the Chief of the Italian Navy, the Chief of Defence and Minister of Defence, and my **EU Chain of Command**: my former Operation Commander, Vice Admiral CREDENDINO, my current Operation Commander Rear Admiral AGOSTINI and last, but not least, the EU Political and Security Committee that endorsed my nomination. I hope I have not betrayed your trust.

Along with them, I want to thank those who allowed me to exercise my command and control functions: the **Force Headquarters staff**. Starting from the last team that followed me until the very last moment on board of the Italian flagship MARGOTTINI and going back to the beginning, I do not have enough word to express my **deep gratitude** to the four chiefs of staff and to the over than 180 officers and petty officers who worked with me day and night, 24/7. It was thank to your outstanding professionalism, personal commitment and



unwavering determination that we effectively accomplished the tasks assigned in both the Operations.

After my staff, my appreciation goes to **ITS San Giorgio and ITS MARGOTTINI**, the **two Italian flagships** that well performed their duty and allowed my staff and me to exercise - easily and effectively - command and control in **Operation IRINI**.

I would like to thank the **hundreds of women and men** who under my tactical command operated at sea, in the air and on land during these months. The daily activity of each of you has been crucial and decisive to act effectively in the Area of Operation, in full compliance and consistency with the mission's mandate.

Last, but not least, my thoughts go to the Commanding Officers of warships and Chief of air detachments who, in this period, with their far-sighted attention have been able to translate my orders into adequate and effective actions.

**Women and men of EUNAVFOR MED you have been part of EUNFAVFOR MED history and with your genuine daily personal commitment, you made these EU Maritime CSDP Operations great, well representing your countries under the EU Flag.**

Allow me to conclude this farewell message, by addressing my best wishes to my successor, the **Hellenic Commodore Mikropulos**: to you, Theodoros, and to the EUNAVFOR MED Task Force 464, I wish fair winds and following seas. I am sure that under your wise leadership, further and greater results will be achieved soon.

My final **sincere regards** go the EU citizens and institutions: it has been a great **honour and privilege** for me, to **serve** as Force Commander **under the European Union flag**.

Taranto, 18 October 2020

Signed  
**Rear Admiral (LH)**  
**Ettore SOCCI**  
First Force Commander  
EUNAVOR MED Operation IRINI