

The European Parliament calls for urgent action! Resolution on the Green Paper on Better Ship Dismantling

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21 May 2008 - Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) adopted, in plenary, on 21st May 2008, a non-legislative resolution on the European Commission's Green Paper on Better Ship Dismantling (COM(2007)0269). The resolution was based on opinions prepared by the Environment, Industry and Transport Committees of the European Parliament, and was tabled for consideration in plenary by Dutch MEP Johannes Blokland (IND/DEM). The MEPs express in their resolution serious concerns over the "humanly degrading and environmentally destructive conditions involved in the dismantling of ships", especially in South Asia. Regretting that possible action is discussed only after high-profile cases, such as the attempt by the French government to dispose of its aircraft-carrier Clémenceau outside the EU, the MEPs call for urgent action to reverse the current situation where primacy is given to short-term profits over human lives and environmental pollution. A lack of political will to tackle the structural hiding of responsibility in the shipping sector, best illustrated by the phenomenon of flag states, must according to the MEPs be countered by practical measures at both the international and European level. At the European level, MEPs call for effective measures to be taken before 2010, prior to the peak year of the accelerated phase-out of single-hull tankers. In this regard, the European Commission and Member States are asked to implement the Waste Shipments Regulation more effectively by carrying out stricter inspections in Member States; compile and maintain a list of ships which are likely to be scrapped within a few years; develop a list of preferred ship recycling facilities which comply with recognised international human rights and health and safety standards; and create a mandatory ship recycling fund. With regards the latter, the MEPs take the clear view that "the ship's operator/owner is always responsible for any harmful effects of the dismantling on workers, public health or the environment [...]" and that the 'polluter pays' principle, the principle of extended producer responsibility and the principle of producer liability should be applied extensively in order to attain a lasting solution." Community subsidies should moreover be granted to the shipping industry only on condition that they adhere to the Waste Shipments Regulation and to other EU requirements, such as the use of certified and regularly audited facilities. Further the European Parliament (EP) resolution urges that immediate measures be taken to support the development of a competitive and clean ship dismantling and remediation (pre-cleaning) industry in the EU, and that the development of such recycling activities at European shipyards should be supported as part of the EU's industrial, structural and cohesion policy. At the international level, the European Commission and Member States are called upon to negotiate a convention with requirements and regulations which ensure a level of control at least equivalent to that of the Basel Convention. The new convention should in that regard require that hazardous materials are removed from end-of-life ships before they are sent for dismantling to non-OECD countries, and disqualify beaching from being an appropriate dismantling method. The MEPs note however that the ongoing negotiations at the International Maritime Organisation are "fraught with many hurdles and delays and should therefore not replace urgent EU action." [European Parliament website](#)