22 May 2007 - The NGO Platform on Shipbreaking is calling for urgent implementation of the European Commission’s (EC) “Green Paper on Better Ship Dismantling”, released today. The international coalition of human rights and environmental NGOs welcomed the fact that the EC paper has acknowledged their concerns regarding the current shipbreaking crisis, and proposed necessary policy changes and innovative ideas on resolving the shipbreaking issue. (Please see extract below)

“We are thrilled to see the European Union take leadership and press the very profitable shipping industry to finally start using some of their profits to manage their end-of-life ships responsibly,” said Ingvild Jenssen, coordinator of the NGO Platform on Shipbreaking. The European Commission’s initiative to develop an EU wide strategy for ship dismantling is also a welcome step forward in the context of the current negotiations for an International Maritime Organisation (IMO) convention on ship dismantling. Although the NGO Platform accepts that the IMO bears responsibility to address the issue in an appropriate way and with a level of control “equivalent” to that found in the Basel Convention, there is currently little evidence to suggest that the IMO, in contrast to the EU, will actually perform its duties with the stringency required. “At present, the Draft IMO Convention places no substantial legal obligations or financial incentives on ship breaking countries or ship owners to improve upon the status quo”, said Jim Puckett from BAN, member organisation of the NGO Platform, “Worse, the IMO convention is not expected to be adopted before 2009 and will be ratified a further six years later at the earliest. By then, it will be too late to deal with the phased out single-hull-oil-tanker fleet and too late for the thousands of workers toiling today. The EU has the ability to act now when it is needed.”

“It is no longer acceptable for Europe's waste problems to be exported to the developing world's ship breaking yards. The reality is that profits are made whilst vulnerable workers are exposed to deadly accidents and toxic chemicals. We therefore urge the EU to follow up the good intentions stated in the Green Paper, with urgent and appropriate action,” concluded Ingvild Jenssen.

Notes to Editors:

a) Strengthening the enforcement of existing Community law, including the Basel Convention and the export ban on hazardous waste, as implemented at EU level through the Waste Shipment Regulation;

b) Acknowledging that the problem of insufficient “clean” capacity will be aggravated by the forthcoming phasing-out of all single-hull oil tankers and that interim solutions are needed before the IMO convention, if accepted, comes into force;

c) Strengthening EU ship dismantling capacity;

d) Requiring that the ship owners, in accordance with the "polluter pays" and producer responsibility principles, take full responsibility for proper disposal of their vessels;

e) Establishing a mandatory funding mechanism where contributions will be linked to IMO registration or the operation of ships over their lifetime, e.g. through port fees or mandatory insurance schemes; and

f) Streamlining shipping aids with a link to green ship dismantling.