Maritime safety: discharge by the Member States of their obligations as flag States in accordance with the IMO Conventions

2005/0236(COD) - 07/04/2008

The Council held a public policy debate on a proposal for a Directive on compliance with flag State requirements.

The Commission transmitted its proposal as part of its third maritime package of seven legislative proposals, which aim to reinforce the safety of maritime transport in Europe. The Council already adopted six political agreements on the basis of five of the proposals. The respective common positions will be transmitted shortly to the European Parliament with a view to reaching an agreement to ensure that their implementation will start as soon as possible.

During the policy debate all Member States underlined the importance they attach to improving maritime safety and the prevention of pollution caused by ships. They considered that fulfilment of the related flag State requirements was an essential element to achieve this objective and that, in particular, the IMO Flag State Code and the IMO Member State Audit Scheme constitute the appropriate means to this effect.

Member States reaffirmed their commitment to take the necessary measures to implement the International Conventions with a view to ensuring a level playing field among the maritime administrations of Member States and underlined the importance of sharing best practices to this effect.

Ministers, furthermore, underlined the need for a level playing field worldwide as regards the way flag States comply with their international obligations, thus contributing to the improvement of maritime safety and the protection of the marine environment and to the elimination of sub-standard ships.

A majority of ministers stated that in their opinion the legislative proposal in question is not the most effective way to achieve the abovementioned objectives. In consequence, the presidency concluded that at this stage the Commission's proposal is not supported by a qualified majority of Member States. The proposal remains on the table, but the Slovenian presidency did not see sufficient political support to be able to work on the original proposal in the near future.