Green Paper on better ship dismantling

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The European Parliament adopted by 645 votes to 8, with 12 abstentions, a resolution on the Green Paper on better ship dismantling.

The own-initiative report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Johannes **BLOKLAND** (IND /DEM, NL) on behalf of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety.

MEPs welcome the thorough analysis in the Green Paper of the principal social and environmental problems arising from operations involved in the dismantling of ships in Southern Asian countries. They c onsider that practical measures must be taken quickly at European and international level, the main aim being to protect the environment and public health.

According to the Parliament, the most comprehensive way of achieving that aim would be to adopt and implement an **international convention** laying down obligations incumbent upon all the parties involved in the process of dismantling ships.The Commission and Member States are therefore called upon to negotiate an IMO convention that incorporates extensive requirements and regulations which:

- ensure a level of control at least equivalent to that of the Basel Convention;
- provide for a high global safety and environmental standard of ship recycling that is third party audited and certified;
- disqualify beaching from being an appropriate dismantling methodology;
- will not allow ship dismantling by non-parties;

- establish the substitution principle for eliminating the current use of hazardous materials in the construction of new ships;

- impose a requirement either to remove all hazardous materials from end-of-life ships before sending them for dismantling to non-OECD countries or to send them to specially authorised recycling facilities in OECD or EU countries which comply with clearly defined safety and environmental standards.

However, MEPs call for effective measures to be taken before 2010, prior to the adoption of the IMO Convention and prior to the peak year of the accelerated phase-out of single-hull tankers.

The Parliament considers it ethically unacceptable to permit the humanly degrading and environmentally destructive conditions involved in the dismantling of ships to continue any longer, thereby accepting that the health of thousands of employees in the Far East is put at risk. Moreover, it considers it ethically unacceptable that children are used by some dismantling contractors to do hard and hazardous work. Recognising that the EU is partly responsible for the existing social and environmental problems in the field of ship dismantling, MEPs call for immediate, concrete action on the part of the EU, in co-operation with the IMO, to stop the practice of social and environmental dumping that stems from economic incentives and to reach a globally sustainable solution.

The Resolution recommends that EU efforts aim at safeguarding minimum standards ensuring the highest environmental, health and safety protection. These standards should include regulations for the design and construction of ships, their operation, the preparation of ships for recycling, the operation of ship recycling facilities and the establishment of an appropriate enforcement mechanism for ship recycling, incorporating certification and reporting requirements.

In particular, the European Commission is called to:

- draft the requisite guidelines and mechanisms to ensure that every ship due to be scrapped and which does not fulfil all the requirements of international conventions, and consequently does not have valid certification issued by EU-recognised registers, is regarded as 'waste', pursuant to the definition in Directive 2006/12/EC;

- compile and maintain a list of seagoing ships which are likely to be scrapped within a few years;

- consider possible measures to reduce the potential financial implications of ship dismantling by setting more stringent production standards, such as a restriction on the use of certain hazardous substances;

- negotiate within the IMO with a view to standardising the materials used in the building and fitting-out of vessels and to tightening up the environmental requirements relating thereto;

- develop a list of preferred ship recycling facilities which comply with recognised international human rights and health and safety standards;

- propose specific measures to promote the transfer of know-how and technology in order to help dismantling yards in Southern Asia to comply with international safety and environmental requirements.

The Commission and Member States are called upon to implement the Waste Shipments Regulation more effectively by means of stricter inspections and supervision by authorities in Member States, with a view to empowering port states, flag states, and states with jurisdiction over owners (waste generators) to declare a ship to be 'end-of-life' and therefore waste regardless of whether or not that ship is still operable. The Resolution also urges that immediate measures be taken to support the development of a competitive and clean ship dismantling and remediation industry in the EU.

Lastly, MEPs consider that the Commission and Member States should create a **mandatory ship recycling fund**, jointly funded by shipyards and shipowners (for example, by means of taxes levied on new ships, port fees and annual taxes linked to IMO registration), with shared responsibility. This fund would facilitate the pre-cleaning of vessels of hazardous materials and the development of ship recycling yards in the European Union.