Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, 2009: ratification or accession by Member States

2012/0056(NLE) - 14/04/2014 - Final act

PURPOSE: to authorise Member States to ratify or to accede to the Hong Kong International Convention of 2009 for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships.

NON-LEGISLATIVE ACT: Council Decision 2014/241/EU concerning the ratification of, or the accession to, the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, 2009, by the Member States in the interests of the European Union.

BACKGROUND: current legislation at international and European levels has proven ineffective to put an end to environmentally unsound and unsafe practices in dismantling ships. This widespread non-compliance is due, among other things, to the fact that the current legislation is not adapted to the specificities of ships and international shipping.

At the end of their operating life, most of the large commercial seagoing vessels are still dismantled in substandard facilities located in Asia (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh), usually through "beaching" method and with significant environmental and health impacts. The situation is expected to worsen since large numbers of ships are expected to be sent for dismantling in the coming years.

To address this situation, in 2004, the Parties to the Basel Convention called on the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) to draw up strict requirements in regard to the recycling of ships.

The Hong Kong Convention for the Safe and Sound Recycling of Ships was adopted in May 2009 by the International Maritime Organisation. However, to enter info force, the convention needs to be ratified by at least 15 States representing a combined merchant fleet of at least 40 per cent of the gross tonnage of the world's merchant shipping.

The Union cannot accede to the Convention, as only States can be parties thereto. Thus the Council authorises Member States having ships flying their flag or registered under their flag which fall within the scope of the Convention to ratify or accede to it.

Objectives of the Convention: the Convention covers the design, construction, operation and preparation of ships so as to facilitate safe and environmentally sound recycling without compromising ship safety and operational efficiency. It also covers the operation of ship recycling facilities in a safe and environmentally sound manner, and the establishment of an appropriate enforcement mechanism for ship recycling.

Ratification: Member States which have ratified or acceded to the Convention shall notify the Commission thereof. The Council will review the progress of the ratification by 31 December 2018.