Agreement for co-operation in dealing with pollution of the North Sea by oil and other harmful substances (Bonn Agreement): extension of its material and geographical scope of application

2020/0205(NLE) - 17/12/2020 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted the report by Pascal CANFIN (Renew Europe, FR) on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the amendments to the Agreement for co-operation in dealing with pollution of the North Sea by oil and other harmful substances (Bonn Agreement) with regard to the extension of the scope of application of that Agreement and on the accession of the Kingdom of Spain to that Agreement.

The committee recommended that Parliament give its consent to the conclusion of the amendments to the agreement.

The Agreement for cooperation in dealing with pollution of the North Sea by oil and other harmful substances (Bonn Agreement) is a regional agreement which aims to protect the marine environment and the interests of the coastal states which are Contracting Parties. It focuses on combating pollution of the North Sea and preserving coastal areas from maritime disasters and long-term pollution from ships and offshore installations.

Through active cooperation and providing mutual assistance, the Contracting Parties to the Agreement carry out surveillance as an aid to detecting and combating pollution and to preventing violations of antipollution regulations.

On 7 October 2019, the Council adopted a decision authorising the Commission to negotiate, on behalf of the Union, amendments to the material and geographical scope of the Agreement (the so-called ‘MARPOL

amendment’ and ‘Spain amendment’, respectively):

- the MARPOL Amendment extends the scope of the Agreement to air pollution from ships as regulated by Annex VI of the MARPOL Convention. It aims to improve cooperation and coordination between the Contracting Parties in combating unlawful air emissions from shipping with a view to limiting the adverse effects of the combustion of marine fuels with high sulphur and nitrogen content on human health, biodiversity and the marine environment as a whole;

- the Spain amendment concerns the extension of the geographical scope of the agreement following the proposal made to Spain to accede to this regional agreement.

The Contracting Parties unanimously adopted these amendments at their meeting on 9-11 October 2019.

According to the rapporteur, the adoption of the MARPOL amendment and the amendment relating to Spain would be a major step towards a higher level of protection of the marine environment in a greater geographical area of the North Sea area.