Maritime transport: external relations also with international organisations

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In its opinion, the ESC agrees entirely with the basic objective of the Communication, namely the liberalization of maritime transport. The Committee shares the purposes and objective aims of Community policy in the field of external relations, which should seek to improve the terms of access to third country markets for the Community shipping industry and to create new opportunities for enterprise and jobs both at sea and in ancillary activities ashore. The Committee goes on to make more specific comments on the various sections of the Communication: - It is cautious about the arguments put forward for strengthening the European Union's role in international organizations through expressing the Community position with a single voice. - It has no objection to the conclusion of bilateral shipping agreements by the EU subject to authorization by the Council, nor to the inclusion of shipping clauses in other types of agreements which the EU concludes from time to time. However, the conclusion of bilateral shipping agreements will take place under ad hoc authorization, on the basis of a specific negotiating mandate and after the necessary prior consultations have taken place between the European Commission, the Member States and the shipping industry. - The ESC thinks in principle that the Member States are entitled to conclude bilateral shipping agreements with third countries as long as their content does not include matters which are regulated by Community acts. - On the revision of Regulations 4057/86/CEE and 4058/86/CEE , it takes the view that, as these regulations are the product of compromises between the Member States and of very delicate balances which would be disturbed if the package were opened up, they should not be modified. Finally, as regards the proposed draft decision to replace Decision 77/587/EEC, the Committee, while agreeing in principle, thinks it necessary to avoid bureaucratic, time-consuming procedures such as those contained in the draft decision presented by the Commission. However, for the EU better to fulfil its mission it is essential to improve the consultation and coordination procedure. The proposed committee should operate not under the authority of the European Commission but as a Council body under the presidency of the Member State currently holding the Council presidency.