

Maritime safety, pollution: international standards for ships using community ports

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The Economic and Social Committee re-affirms its support for the ISM code as a major and important instrument for improving standards of maritime safety worldwide and welcomes the Commission's proposal to make detention of a vessel mandatory in the absence of a recognized document of compliance and safety management certificate, even if it recognizes that significant practical problems need to be overcome as the code initially enters into force. The Committee accepts the amendment to the Directive that permits Member States, at their discretion, to allow ships which do not comply on their first call at a Community port after 1 July 1998 to be released from detention and to continue their voyages, but only to ports outside the Community. It emphasizes that apart from this single proviso there should be no further derogations of any sort and the provisions of the proposed new Article 9(a) should be strictly complied with. The Committee considers that it is of the utmost importance that the Port State Control provisions should be applied in a uniform manner throughout the Community so that owners are not tempted to send ships which do not totally comply with the requirements to ports where they perceive that a more lax inspection regime is applied. As a more general point the Committee believes that confirmation that a ship carries this and the other necessary documentation required under the Port State Control procedures might be facilitated by the adoption of a pre-notification procedure and suggests that this might be the subject of further study by the Commission with a view to its possible development within the IMO.