Air pollution: strategy to reduce atmospheric emissions from seagoing ships

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PURPOSE : to present a strategy to reduce the impact of emissions from seagoing ships on local air quality and acidification. CONTENT : this European Union strategy to reduce atmospheric emissions from seagoing ships will also help support the promotion of shipping as an environmentally friendly mode of transport a key opportunity for the maritime industry in light of recent events. An important part of the strategy is a proposal to reduce the sulphur contents of marine fuels used in the European Union. The role of this strategy is to explain concisely the contribution made by atmospheric emissions from seagoing ships to environmental problems in the European Union, and to set out a broad series of objectives, actions and recommendations for reducing these emissions over the next 10 years. It is not intended to set out detailed measures at this stage. The main objective of this Communication is to deal with the effect of the emissions on the land, and on global aspects (climate change and depletion of the ozone layer). The problem of marine eutrophication is briefly discussed in this strategy, but this and other threats to EU seas are being considered in more detail in the Commission's new marine environment strategy adopted on 2 October 2002. This communication also contributes to the Clean Air for Europe programme (CAFE) which was launched last year7 with a view to adopting a thematic strategy on air pollution covering all relevant emission sources. The European Environment Agency has found a high level of urban air quality exceedances for both ground level ozone and particulate matter, so the CAFE programme will give priority emphasis to these pollutants. As stated, the overall objective of this strategy is to reduce the contribution of ships' atmospheric emissions towards environmental and human health problems in the EU. Prescriptive targets have not been included; but the Commission does propose a number of objectives to guide EU and national policies in the longer term. These objectives are: - to reduce ships' emissions of SO2 where they contribute to exceedances of critical loads for acidification, and where they affect local air quality - to reduce ships' emissions of NOx where they contribute to exceedances of critical loads for acidification and eutrophication, and to levels of ground-level ozone which affect human health and vegetation; - to reduce ships' emissions of primary particles where they affect local air quality; - to reduce ships' emissions of VOCs where these contribute to levels of ground-level ozone which affect human health and vegetation; - to reduce ships' unitary emissions of CO2 - to eliminate emissions of ozone-depleting substances on all ships operating in EU waters. These measures will have significant human health benefits reducing the incidence of asthma, bronchitis and heart failure, particularly in populated port areas. It is estimated that the ship emissions reductions achieved as a result of this proposal would lead to at least 2000 fewer life years lost in the EU through long-term exposure to emissions, 750 fewer deaths from short-term exposure, and 300 fewer hospital admissions forrespiratory illness. The strategy sets out a number of other important actions including a push for tougher global emissions standards at the International Maritime Organisation, the development of new market-based measures to reduce ship emissions beyond regulatory standards, and the creation of a new Clean Marine Award scheme to promote low-emission shipping in the European Union. The Commission concludes by stating that it has set out to demonstrate the contribution made by atmospheric emissions from seagoing ships to environmental and human health problems in the EU. It is clear that ships are a high source of emissions, particularly in terms of sulphur dioxide where ship emissions are higher than all other transport modes per tonne kilometre, and by 2010 are likely to equate to over 75% of emissions from all land-based sources in EU. The Commission has also begun to examine the impact of ships' emissions, by assessing where their deposition contributes to exceedances of critical loads for the environment and human health. This work will continue, with the new ship emissions data being incorporated into modelling of impacts on air pollution and the marine environment in the EU. This strategy also includes recommendations for action from other stakeholders. It is particularly important that EU Member States work together through the International Maritime Organisation to bring about tougher international standards through MARPOL Annex VI. Shipping, oil and port industries also have a central role to play. A constructive dialogue has

begun in preparing this strategy, built on genuine consensus - that if shipping is to maintain its green image, doing nothing is not an option, and atmospheric emissions must be reduced. The Commission looks forward to continuing that dialogue in coming years, on the basis of the objectives, actions and recommendations set out in this strategy.