Air pollution: strategy to reduce atmospheric emissions from seagoing ships

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Caroline LUCAS (Greens/EFA, UK) in response to the Commission paper on an EU strategy to reduce atmospheric emissions from seagoing ships. While agreeing with the Commission's recommendations, MEPs wanted it to go even further and to consider including polycyclic aromatics (such as PAH) and heavy metals (e.g. Nickel and Vanadium) among the emissions to be covered by the strategy. They also said that the Commission's overall objective (of reducing the contribution of ship's atmospheric emissions towards environmental and human health problems in the EU) should be extended so that it also aims explicitly to reduce ships' emissions of greenhouse gases (such as CO2) and their contribution to global warming. The committee noted the Commission's intention of identifying and undertaking specific actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from marine shipping if the IMO had not adopted a concrete ambitious strategy on this by 2003. The report noted with concern that the Commission's proposal on the revision of the 1999 directive on the sulphur content of marine fuels would only reduce sulphur emissions from seagoing ships in European sea areas by about 10%, as compared to their emission level in 2000, and pointed out that emissions needed to be reduced by at least 80% (as Parliament had recommended at its 1st reading in June 2003) in order to achieve the objectives of the 6th Environmental Action Programme. The Commission was accordingly urged to set more ambitious targets as regards the proposed limit values and the sea areas to be covered and also to analyse the costs and benefits of alternative, more far-reaching abatement measures. MEPs also wanted the Commission to give a stronger commitment to drawing up legislation to reduce NOX emissions, rather than linking this action to future developments in the IMO. Whereas the Commission had pledged only to take such action if the IMO had not proposed tighter international NOX standards for marine engines by the end of 2006, MEPs called on the Commission to present a proposal, before the end of 2004, for NOX emission standards for ships with the aim of reducing NOX emissions from ship engines. Lastly, the committee expressed concern that the Commission had not yet come forward with proposals for an EU system of differentiated charges for all transport modes that takes into account marginal social costs including the external costs of air pollution and climate change, despite it being announced in the strategy that such a proposal was due in "early 2003".