Fight against drugs : suppression by customs administrations of illicit trafficking on the high seas. Initiative Spain

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The committee adopted the report by Marjo MATIKAINEN-KALLSTRÖM (EPP-ED, FIN) amending the proposal under the consultation procedure. MEPs tabled amendments to the legal basis enabling the EU to extend the scope of the proposed Convention to cover other types of criminal offence committed on the high seas in addition to illicit drug trafficking and to involve not just customs administrations but all competent law enforcement authorities. They argued that, unless this was done, a large number of criminal offences would go unpunished, thus posing a serious threat to the health and security of EU citizens. The additional offences which the committee said should be covered by the Convention included illicit trafficking in weapons, nuclear materials, human beings, human organs, toxic waste and cultural goods (including antiques and works of art). The committee was also concerned to ensure that anyone detained under any circumstances should be guaranteed fundamental rights such as the right to a fair trial. It stipulated that anyone not suspected of having committed an offence should be released immediately and that items that may not be used as evidence should be returned. Lastly, MEPs wanted each Member State to set up a central authority for receiving and passing on communications, which should remain operational 24 hours a day throughout the year.