Accelerated phasing-in of double-hull or equivalent design requirements for single-hull oil tankers

2006/0046(COD) - 27/03/2006 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to amend Regulation 417/2002/EC in order to prevent heavy duty oil tankers from flying the flag of a Member State in a single-hull oil tanker.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

CONTENT: to recall, Regulation 417/2002/EC was adopted in order to introduce double-hull (or equivalent design requirements for single-hull) oil tankers in a bid to reduce the risk from oil pollution. The sinking of the Prestige oil tanker in December 2002 prompted the EU to amend Regulation 417/2002. The amendment allowed for an accelerated timetable for the phasing out of single-hull oil tankers as well as the immediate prohibition of the carriage of heavy grade oil products in single-hull oil tankers bound for or leaving ports in a Member State of the European Union.

In December 2003 the Marine Environment Protection Committee of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) adopted amendments based on EU measures – bar certain exceptions concerning the ban of the carriage of heavy grade oil products in single-hull oil tankers. Under these IMO exceptions, a ship flying the flag of a Member State could take advantage of the exceptions – if they operated outside ports or offshore terminals under Community jurisdiction, whilst at the same time complying with Regulation 417/2002.

In a bid to prevent ships flying the flag of a Member State from taking advantage of these exceptions, the Commission is proposing this amendment. The amendment, a single article, has been phrased thus: “No oil tanker carrying have grade oil products, shall be allowed to fly the flag of a Member State unless such a tanker is a double-hull oil tanker.” In other words this amendment would prohibit the carriage of heavy grades of oil in all single-hull tankers flying the flag of a Member State irrespective of the jurisdiction governing the ports, offshore terminals or the maritime area in which they operate.