Maritime safety: discharge by the Member States of their obligations as flag States in accordance with the IMO Conventions

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The committee adopted the report by Marta VINCENZI (PES, IT) amending - under the 1st reading of the codecision procedure - the proposed directive on compliance with flag State requirements:

- it should be specified in the directive that Member States should discharge their obligations as flag States in accordance not just with the IMO Conventions but also with the relevant ILO instruments, given that compliance with the international standards governing working conditions provides an additional guarantee of maritime safety;

- the Code of Safe Practice for Ships Carrying Timber Deck Cargoes and the Code of Safe Practice for Solid Bulk Cargoes should both be incorporated into the list of IMO Conventions mentioned in the directive;

- as a precondition for the first registration of a ship in a Member State, the Member State concerned should ascertain that the ship complies with the relevant international rules and ensure that this is confirmed by documentary evidence in its possession. If necessary, "but in every case if the ship is not newly built", it should liaise with the previous flag State and request it to pass on the necessary documents and data;

- the committee amended the provisions on the information to be included in the database of each Member State, dividing this into two categories: (a) individual information, for each ship registered (including such details as the date of registration and, if appropriate, of removal from the register, repairs performed or pending, etc.); and (b) general information concerning all ships in the register (including the number of annual inspections of all types carried out by or on behalf of the flag State, broken down by procedure). All this information should be immediately forwarded in full to the new flag State if a ship leaves the register and is transferred to another register;

- the committee included a reference to the 2002 directive establishing a Community vessel traffic monitoring and information system, and said that Member States should lay down an appropriate programme for ships flying their flag which would make it possible to use the Community SafeSeaNet data exchange system to provide a "timely and comprehensive response" to requests for information and clarification submitted by ports or coastal states in the event of accidents or deficiencies;

- lastly, the committee was keen to ensure that the proposal would not impose an unduly heavy administrative burden on Member States, and adopted a number of amendments designed to make it easier for them to comply with information requirements and also to avoid carrying out too many supplementary investigations.