

Press Release – NGOs Call on Singapore Ship Owners to End Dangerous Shipbreaking Practices and Embrace Modern Ship Recycling

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Singapore, 6 March 2014 – The NGO Shipbreaking Platform, a global coalition of 19 environmental, human rights and labour rights organisations working to prevent dangerous and polluting shipbreaking worldwide, is calling on Singapore-based ship owners to stop selling their end-of-life ships filled with hazardous wastes to beach-breaking yards in developing countries, but rather demand clean and safe ship recycling. *“It is now time for South East Asian ship owners to join the front-runners of the maritime industry mainly based in Europe and say no to a practice that is harming the environment and people,”* says Patrizia Heidegger, Executive Director of the NGO Shipbreaking Platform, who just spoke at the TradeWinds Ship Recycling Forum held in Singapore. *“There are various opportunities to choose clean and safe ship recycling, and it’s time for responsible South East Asian ship owners to seize these.”* Shipbreaking as practiced today on the beaches in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan is a cause for pollution of the coastal ecosystems next to the yards. This also includes erosion and an increased risks of floods when the coastal green belt of mangrove trees is cut down in Bangladesh. Not only are workers exposed to dangerous waste in the yards and downstream scrap yards, but the industry also effects surrounding communities, including fishermen who have lost their livelihoods. By selling their ships to such yards, Singapore shipping companies are effectively encouraging substandard shipbreaking that continue to harm the local environment and communities. *“Singapore as an industrialised state and a major shipping hub must make sure it does not externalise costs for hazardous waste management to developing countries when scrapping its ships”*, says Jim Puckett, Executive Director of US-based Basel Action Network (BAN). *“What is more, ship owners need to develop ship recycling policies that take into account the real costs for responsible recycling”*. In a list published in February [1], the Platform counted that out of 39 Singapore-owned ships sent for dismantling last year, almost all were sent to the South Asian beach-breaking yards: 17 ships were sent to India, 9 to Bangladesh and 5 to Pakistan. Containership owner Neptune Orient Lines (NOL) sold 6 end-of-life ships for dismantling in 2013, all of them to either Alang, India or Chittagong, Bangladesh [2]. *“Shipbreaking yards in South Asia do not operate according to international environmental standards. Ship owners should make sure their end-of-life ships are recycled in accordance with those standards,”* says Ritwick Dutta, environmental lawyer from India, who also spoke in the conference. *“Ship owners should not just rely on certificates presented to them, but must verify under which conditions their old ships are really demolished”*. The European Union has effectively disqualified beaching for EU-flagged ships by issuing a new EU Ship Recycling Regulation in December 2013. The regulation requires recycling facilities to operate from “built structures” and asks for full containment of all pollutants, leakage control and impermeable floors. European ship owners that have chosen an anti-beaching position including Dutch ship owner Boskalis, as well as Norwegian companies Grieg Shipping, Wilhelmsen and Høegh Autoliners. In North America, Canadian Steamship Lines (CSL) has declared not to beach any of its ships anymore, and leading international oil and gas companies chose cleaner and safer recycling for their tankers. NOTES: [1] The 2013 lists are available here: <http://bit.ly/LHuOTn> [2] See our complete list in the appendix. CONTACT: Patrizia Heidegger Executive Director NGO Shipbreaking Platform patrizia@shipbreakingplatform.org www.shipbreakingplatform.org In Singapore: 0065 8331 9468 Jim Puckett Executive Director Basel Action Network jpuckett@ban.org www.ban.org Ritwick Dutta Lawyer Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment (LIFE) ritwickdutta@gmail.com