

## Activists Welcome Clemenceau Back to France — Demand that Europe Clean or Recycle its Own Ships

2006-05-16 18:05:35 Shipbreaking

16 May 2006 - Days before the expected arrival back in France of the ex-aircraft carrier Clemenceau following its controversial and costly aborted voyage to India, the NGO Platform on Shipbreaking praised the French government for taking the first step towards European responsibility for its toxic old commercial and government ships. However they also warned that Europe still lacks any kind of real solution for its growing ship scrapping crisis and must therefore immediately find the means to develop capacity for decontaminating and dismantling obsolete vessels.

“The Clemenceau is back but it has nowhere to go for proper decontamination and recycling”, said Annie Thébaud-Mony from Ban Asbestos, member of the NGO Platform on Shipbreaking. “The European Union has banned the export of hazardous wastes to developing countries but has failed to create a solution for proper pre-cleaning and dismantling in Europe.” However, the NGO Platform found some hope in recent statements by the European Environment Commissioner Mr. Stavros Dimas. During the 25 April 2006(1) open hearing on shipbreaking in the European Parliament, Dimas announced that the EU is prepared to act on shipbreaking as a matter of urgency in advance of the development of rules agreed through the International Maritime Organization (IMO). He also noted that a comprehensive EU strategy which might call for mandatory EU rules on ship recycling in line with the recently proposed UK strategy(2), is the goal. Amongst measures proposed by Dimas was the internalisation of shipbreaking costs in accordance with the ‘polluter pays’ principle. This would imply that safe and environmentally sound shipbreaking should no longer be considered a profit maker for the shipping industry, but a service, the costs of which must be paid for by those responsible for employing and benefiting from the toxic substances on board the ships instead of being paid for by the lives of labourers in South Asia. Many more vessels besides the Clemenceau will have to be decontaminated in OECD countries before export very soon. According to an EU study(3) on the consequences of the global ban on single hull oil tankers over 2,000 tankers will have to be broken within ten years. “The Commission has spoken some very good words which must now urgently be followed by real deeds, because the clock is ticking and people in Asia are dying,” said Karine Appy from the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), member of the NGO Platform on Shipbreaking. “So far nobody has been willing to take responsibility, least of all the Navies of the world or the global shipping industry – it’s clear the European Union governments must stop sitting on their hands, stand up and safely manage their own ships.” (1)European Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas speech can be downloaded from <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/06/259&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en> (2)The UK Strategy on Ship Recycling, can be downloaded from [www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/shiprecycling-strategy/consultation.pdf](http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/shiprecycling-strategy/consultation.pdf) (3)European Commission (2004): Oil Tanker Phase Out and the Ship Scrapping Industry. A study on the implications of the accelerated phase out scheme of single hull tankers proposed by the EU for the world ship scrapping and recycling industry, Final Report to the European Commission Directorate-General Energy and Transport, June 2004, Brussels. See also “Destination unknown. European single hull oiltankers: no place to go”, Greenpeace International, December 2004, can be downloaded from <http://www.greenpeace.org/shipbreak>