

Press Release – NGOs condemn the delay in establishing a European Ship recycling Fund until 2015

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But welcome European Parliament decision to end beaching

Strasbourg/Brussels, 18 April 2013 – Environmental, human rights and labour rights organisations worldwide grouped under the umbrella organisation NGO Shipbreaking Platform, have condemned today's vote by the European Parliament against the creation of what would have been the first-ever ship recycling fund, a market-based incentive aimed at financing cleaner and safer ship recycling worldwide. Members of the European Parliament by a clear majority agreed to demand that such a financial mechanism be created by the European Commission by 2015, a decision the Platform deems irresponsible as it only delays the unavoidable – both the Commission and the Parliament having declared in the past (1) that a fund is urgently needed to solve the global shipbreaking crisis, without ever delivering their promise. *"The idea of a fund has been discussed for 15 years at the European level. Let's face it: the Parliament failed to uphold its own principles and to deliver as promised"*, said Patrizia Heidegger, Executive Director of the NGO Shipbreaking Platform. *"Last year, one European ship was sent to a substandard beaching yard in South Asia every day. The EU needs to move now if it really wants to hold European shipowners accountable."* The fund, which was from the start enthusiastically supported by the NGO Shipbreaking Platform, was proposed by Carl Schlyter (Greens-EFA) and was opposed mainly by members of EPP - the European People's Party, the biggest political group in the EU Parliament (2). The fund (voted against by a slight majority: 299 MEPs against; 292 for the fund) was envisioned to require all shipowners calling at EU ports, regardless of their flag, to pay a fee into a fund. The fund would finance proper ship recycling and hazardous waste management in EU-vetted facilities only. The fund aimed at preventing ships from reflagging outside of the EU, a common practice when ships are sold for beaching. Whereas 40% of the world's fleet is European-owned, only 17% fly an EU flag (3). Christofer Fjellner (EPP) introduced an amendment which acknowledged the *"... extreme externalisation of costs and unacceptable conditions involved in the dismantling of ships"* and described an *"incentive-based system that would facilitate safe and sound ship recycling"* as the best solution. Regrettably, Fjellner's amendment postpones the decision-making to the end of 2015 by calling on the European Commission to *"submit a legislative proposal"*. The plenary vote showed that the Parliament failed to agree on concrete solutions to hold shipowners accountable, and preferred to pass the ball back to the Commission. *"Especially the EPP has backed down after the massive pressure built up by the shipping industry, and tried to save face by sweeping the issue under the Commission's carpet,"* Heidegger commented. Nevertheless, the NGO Shipbreaking Platform can celebrate that the MEPs have voted in favour of more stringent rules that will effectively ban beaching of EU-flagged ships. The Platform has been campaigning for years so that the unsustainable practice of beaching which is at the source of extreme pollution and human rights and labour rights violations in developing countries, is a thing of the past. However, a European ban on beaching without a funding mechanism to prevent reflagging of ships out of the EU at end-of-life, remains far too weak. It is expected that few ships will fall under the direct scope of the proposed regulation at end-of-life. The Platform applauded Vittorio Prodi (S&D) for having introduced an amendment for green ship design, which surprisingly was voted against by the Parliament, that would have minimised the use of hazardous materials during shipbuilding, so as to remove hazardous materials from modern fleets and to facilitate the best recycling practices at end-of-life. This amendment, which had also been advocated by Sabine Wils (GUE-NGL) would have been widely welcomed as it envisages a holistic solution for ships from cradle to cradle. **NOTES**

(1) The Commission in its 2008 Strategy for Better Ship Dismantling called for the establishment of "a mandatory international funding system for clean ship dismantling" (COM(2008)0767) and the Parliament in its 2009 resolution called for "a funding mechanism that is based on mandatory contributions from the shipping industry and is in line with the producer responsibility principle" – see <http://www.shipbreakingplatform.org/library/other-documents-eu-policy/>

(2) The EPP introduced an amendment to postpone the establishment of the fund until at least 2015. The fund would have to be proposed via a new legislative proposal - thus by the European Commission.

(3) European Commission 2012 Impact Assessment – see <http://bit.ly/1743owp>

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