

Press release – NGOs support EU Parliament Environment Committee call for ship recycling fund and off-the-beach stance

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But denounce illegal removal of ships from Basel regime

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The fund should eliminate the price gap to substandard facilities located on beaches in non-OECD countries where shipowners currently obtain the highest prices for their end-of-life ships, even when shipbreaking workers are killed and suffer from occupational diseases caused by the toxic materials present in these ships. Moreover, the NGOs welcome the groundbreaking decision to outlaw beaching, the polluting and dangerous practice of breaking ships on tidal beaches. *“This EU regulation can be the first supra-national legally-binding rule which prohibits beaching,”* says Patrizia Heidegger, the Executive Director of the NGO Shipbreaking Platform. *“In the future, beaching must be replaced by safer methods in all countries, as has been agreed upon by the international community in the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Wastes and their Disposal.”* However, the NGO Shipbreaking Platform and several legal experts also decry the Parliament’s Environment Committee for voting to remove toxic ships from the EU Waste Shipment Regulation, a proposal that would suddenly legalise the export of end-of-life ships built with asbestos, heavy metals or PCBs to non-OECD countries. The Platform warns that this unilateral step violates the EU’s and Member States’ obligations under the Basel Convention and the Basel Ban Amendment. *“Such a proposal does not stand against any careful analysis of European and international law,”* says Ludwig Krämer, an environmental lawyer and former head of the waste management unit at the European Commission’s DG Environment. In November 2012, Krämer argued in a legal analysis that removing end-of-life ships from the EU Waste Shipment Regulation was against international law. Under the international Basel Convention to which all Member States and the EU itself are parties, and under current European law (Waste Shipment Regulation) ships sold for recycling are considered hazardous waste, the export of which from the EU to non-OECD countries like India is currently illegal. There can be no unilateral decision that ships are not hazardous waste: only the Basel Convention itself can decide on this matter, which they have not. The NGO Shipbreaking Platform welcomed that Vittorio Prodi, a Social Democrat MEP (S&D), had been in favour of keeping the Basel regime applied to EU-flagged ships, but unfortunately his amendments were voted against. *“This vote also goes against the Parliament’s own resolutions,”* says Patrizia Heidegger. *“Less than two weeks ago, the Parliament inked a resolution in plenary calling for the end of the ‘illegal and unethical’ export of end-of-life ships containing asbestos to developing countries. We call on all members of the European Parliament to refuse to let the Basel regime lose its grasp on European toxic ships.”* Unfortunately, amendments tabled by Sabine Wils, an MEP from the Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL), for clearer requirements for green ship design, were voted against. Introducing a definition for green ship design would have meant less hazardous materials in new-built ships, and would also have reduced the risk of burdening developing countries with toxic waste. The NGOs also supported Tadeusz Cymanski, an MEP from the Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group (EFD), who promoted clean and safe ship recycling in the EU. Despite being an economic opportunity for the EU, his amendments were voted against. **CONTACT:** Patrizia Heidegger Executive director NGO Shipbreaking Platform +32 (0) 2 6094 419 patrizia@shipbreakingplatform.org **NOTES:** - Link to Ludwig Krämer’s study on the legality of removing end-of-life ships from the Basel Convention regime (November 2012): <http://bit.ly/T3Oile> - Link to the EP resolution on “Asbestos-related occupational health threats and prospects for abolishing all existing asbestos” mentioned above: <http://bit.ly/X4z6rv> - Link to the 2012 list of EU-based shipowners that sent their ships to South Asian yards where the beaching method is used (February 2013): <http://bit.ly/A89gAS> **PHOTOS** (source: NGO Shipbreaking Platform)



