

## Media alert – Toxic ship Exxon Valdez sent for dismantling

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**26 March 2012, Brussels** - The Exxon Valdez, now re-named the Oriental Nicety, a ship responsible for one of the largest oil spills in U.S. history in 1989, has been sold for scrapping on the infamous ship breaking beaches of India. Environmental, human rights and labour rights organisations represented by the Brussels-based NGO Shipbreaking Platform fear that the beaching of the Exxon Valdez will cause another environmental disaster and will also harm shipbreaking workers and local communities. The NGOs call on the government of India to refuse the import of the toxic ship and say no to illegal toxic waste trade. It is expected that the Exxon Valdez, built in 1984-1986 in the U.S. contains many tonnes of hazardous materials, including toxic paints, fuel and chemical residues. Currently the ship is located in Malaysia and may soon hit the Indian beaches. "If the ship is allowed to come to India, not only will it be environmentally hazardous given the generally poor level of environmental compliance and monitoring, but will reinforce the fact that countries in the South continue to serve as dumping ground for hazardous waste of the North. Following the 'precautionary principle' it is important that no permission be granted for entry of the ship to India," Ritwick Dutta, environmental lawyer and platform member, said. Twenty-three years ago, the oil tanker Exxon Valdez belonged to the American oil company Exxon Mobil. On 24 March 1989, the Exxon Valdez struck a reef in the Prince William Sound in waters off Alaska, spilling approximately 34,000 tonnes of oil into the Pacific Ocean. The pollution was so great that the clean-up costs alone amounted to USD 2.5 billion. By the end of 2009, Exxon Mobil had paid nearly USD 1 billion in damages. "It is outrageous that this ship, that has already created one environmental catastrophe is being allowed to kill and pollute yet again," said Jim Puckett, Executive Director of the Basel Action Network. "The ship's owner must be held accountable for simply selling this toxic time bomb and then walking away." Exxon sold the ship in August 2008 to China Ocean Shipping (Group) Company (COSCO), owner of the second largest shipping fleet in the world. COSCO claims to be a leading participant in the United Nations Global Compact, committing to business operations that uphold fundamental human rights, labour and environment protection laws. However, this move by COSCO to sell the former Exxon Valdez for beaching and breaking in India starkly violates this Compact. COSCO sold the vessel to a shipbroker for USD 13.4 million according to data from Intermodal (1). Global Marketing Systems (GMS), a US company specialised in the brokering of vessels for demolition recently bought the ship. Shipbreaking as is done on the beaches of South Asia is one of the world's most dangerous and polluting enterprises (2). Toxic ships should be dismantled in green recycling facilities that forbid beaching and where workers and the environment are protected from exposure to toxic waste. Notes (1) <http://www.intermodal.gr/site/market/market.php> (2) For more information see our website [www.shipbreakingplatform.org](http://www.shipbreakingplatform.org)