



Mrs Sheikh Hasina  
The Honourable Prime Minister of Bangladesh

Brussels, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2011

Dear Madam,

With this letter, the NGO Platform on Shipbreaking and all its member organizations<sup>1</sup> wish to draw your attention to the political reasons behind the donation that the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) is planning to make to the government of Bangladesh to improve the working conditions on the shipbreaking yards in your country.

Earlier this month, the NGO Platform on Shipbreaking and other 41 organisations worldwide have sent you a letter (enclosed) requesting your intervention against the dumping of hazardous end-of-life ships, primarily by western, foreign owners, which results in the continuing exploitation of Bangladeshi labourers and the coastal environment. The Bangladeshi newspapers have recently reported that the IMO will give Taka 35 crore (approximately 3,118,200 GBP) to the government of Bangladesh to invest in the training of shipbreaking workers.

With this letter we kindly ask you to be cautious in accepting funding which should be provided only if the donors commit to infrastructural development in the yards.

Only investment in infrastructure aimed at taking the shipbreaking activity off the beaches of Bangladesh would adequately protect the environment and the workers of Bangladesh, by bringing to a minimum the many deaths and accidents on the yards and by protecting the coastal zones, already severely affected by the loss of fishery and forests.

It is unacceptable that European and western countries protect their own beaches and labourers and refuse to take the responsibility for dismantling or pre-cleaning their own ships in their own facilities. Yet due to the higher costs involved in the safe and sound pre-cleaning and dismantling of ships in proper facilities, the shipping industry relies on the new IMO Hong Kong Convention to be ratified. This draft convention in its current wordings would result in perpetuating to use Bangladesh as a dumping ground for obsolete vessels laden with deadly hazardous waste materials found on board such ships including asbestos, PCBs, toxic paints, biocides, and fuel residues.

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<sup>1</sup>The NGO Platform on Shipbreaking is a global coalition of environmental, human and labour rights organisations, working to reverse the environmental and human rights abuses of current shipbreaking practices and to ensure safe and environmentally sound dismantling of end-of-life ships worldwide. The members of the Platform are: **the Basel Action Network (BAN), Greenpeace, the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), the European Federation of Transport and Environment (T&E), Bellona, the North Sea Foundation, the Ban Asbestos Network, Prevention of Hazardous Shipbreaking Initiative Turkey, Young Power in Social Action (YPSA), Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS), Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation (OSHE), Toxics Links, Legal Initiative for Forests and the Environment (LIFE).**

The Platform and its member organisations consider this IMO investment project as grossly insufficient to deal with the magnitude of the problem and rather an attempt to legalise the status quo of the shipbreaking industry in Bangladesh.

With our confidence in your righteous thinking and humanitarian leadership, we urge you to request tangible infrastructural investment in the shipbreaking yards in order to achieve substantial socio economic improvement of the shipbreaking industry in Bangladesh.

We are grateful for your kind and careful consideration of our concern on this issue and we look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Grazia CIOCI,  
Acting Director, NGO Platform on Shipbreaking