

# Press Release – NGOs call on Polish state owned shipping company Polsteam to stop beaching its toxic ships

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Environmental, human and labour rights organisations denounce Polish government-owned shipping company POLSTEAM for its poor shipbreaking practices and call upon POLSTEAM to take the necessary action concerning its ship recycling practices as a matter of urgency. The NGO Shipbreaking Platform and the European Environmental Bureau, and the more than 160 environmental, human and labour rights organisations they represent, together with Polish NGOs Fundacja Instytut na rzecz Ekorozwoju and Towarzystwo na Rzecz Ziemi, have sent a letter to POLSTEAM asking the company, and the government, to change its practices. [1] *“As an EU Member State owned shipping company, POLSTEAM should set an example and adhere to a ship recycling policy that is in line with EU standards and legislation. It is a disgrace to have a Polish state owned company listed amongst the top dumpers of toxic end-of-life ships on the beaches of developing countries,”* said Patrizia Heidegger, Executive Director of the NGO Shipbreaking Platform. [2]



Whilst new European Union legislation clearly disqualifies shipbreaking on tidal beaches as environmentally sound and safe and more ship owners join the group of those that do not want to be associated with dangerous and polluting practices [3], POLSTEAM has already this year sold three end-of-life vessels to South Asian beaching yards. The bulk carriers ARMIA LUDOWA and POLSKA WALCZACA were sold to Bangladesh breakers where shipbreaking is globally acknowledged not to respect even minimum human rights and environmental standards. *(Pictured on the left: Polsteam logo) “Yet another gas cylinder explosion severely injured at least eight workers in Chittagong this weekend. I am wondering how many more accidents we have to document before the authorities in Bangladesh decide to hold a yard manager accountable for putting peoples' lives in danger - and for how long European ship owners, such as POLSTEAM, still want to profit from this dirty business?”* said Patrizia Heidegger. POLSTEAM is undergoing a fleet replacement and investment programme for the years 2015 to 2020 and still owns at least 15 vessels built in the 1990s that are likely candidates for scrapping in the next couple of years. *“The NGO Shipbreaking Platform has constructively consulted with many responsible owners of vessels and has together with these companies identified sustainable solutions for clean and safe ship recycling. We would be glad to exchange with POLSTEAM about available solutions. Poland has lots of dormant capacity for ship recycling, its laid-down shipbuilding industry could be converted to modern ship recycling facilities ”*, said Patrizia Heidegger. **CONTACT** Patrizia Heidegger Executive Director NGO Shipbreaking Platform +32 26094419 [patrizia@shipbreakingplatform.org](mailto:patrizia@shipbreakingplatform.org) **NOTES**

**Watch a video from a Polsteam**

**ship being beached in India** [1] Letters to Polsteam [in English](#) and [in Polish](#); letters to the Polish government [in English](#) and [in Polish](#) [2] Since 2009, POLSTEAM has sold 13 end-of-life vessels for dirty and dangerous shipbreaking in South Asia. In India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, end-of-life vessels are demolished in the intertidal zone. This practice would never be allowed in the EU and has been banned in other ship recycling countries such as China, Taiwan and Turkey. The beaching of vessels does not allow for the containment and safe removal of hazardous waste from the structure of the vessel and cannot prevent the pollution of the coastal environment. Moreover, beaching cannot guarantee the protection of workers' health and safety. In particular the shipbreakers of Bangladesh employ children and young boys, which is illegal under international law as well as the Bangladesh Labor Act. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) considers shipbreaking as one of the most hazardous jobs in the world. None of the South Asian yards meet the requirements of the new EU Regulation on Ship Recycling. [3] [Thirteen large shipping companies already follow sustainable ship recycling policies](#). In addition to several Norwegian ship owners such as Grieg, Wilhelmsen and Høegh, also German Hapag-Lloyd, Danish Maersk Lines, Royal Dutch Boskalis, Canadian CSL Group and Singapore-based China Navigation Company, have committed to ensuring the proper end-of-life management of their fleet. They do so on principle, even if they have to compromise on their profits – they simply do not want to be responsible for polluting sensitive coastal zones and putting workers lives at risk during dirty and dangerous shipbreaking on tidal beaches. The recent announcement of the Norwegian Shipowners' Association adds many more shipping companies to the list of responsible stakeholders.