Question for written answer E-005831/2012
to the Commission
Rule 117
Rebecca Harms (Verts/ALE)

Subject: Sunken nuclear-powered submarines and highly radioactive nuclear waste on the seabed

In 1989, the Soviet nuclear-powered submarine K-278, the *Komsomolets*, which was fitted with two nuclear reactors and torpedoes with nuclear warheads, sank in the Barents Sea at a depth of 1 680 metres. In 2003, the Russian nuclear-powered submarine K-159, which was fitted with two nuclear reactors and had 800 kg of highly enriched nuclear fuel on board, sank in the Barents Sea at a depth of 240 metres. According to an official report published by the Russian State Council in June 2011, an uncontrollable chain reaction in the nuclear reactors is 'highly likely'. In total, according to the report, there are three nuclear-powered submarines, 14 nuclear reactors, 19 ships carrying solid nuclear waste, 735 radioactive objects and over 17 000 containers of radioactive waste lying on the seabed in the Arctic Ocean.

1. How does the Commission assess the danger from sunken highly radioactive waste and sunken nuclear-powered submarines (K-159, K-278 *Komsomolets*?) in the Arctic Ocean?

2. Russian scientists believe that an uncontrollable nuclear chain reaction in the reactors of the K-159 and K-278 submarines is 'highly likely'. In the Commission's view, what implications does this have for the fishing grounds in the Kara Sea and the Barents Sea?

3. Where does the Commission stand on the calls to recover the K-159 and K-278 submarines and the sunken nuclear reactors, as well as the fuel rods and other highly radioactive waste?