Question for written answer E-004433/2019

to the Commission

Rule 138

Karima Delli (Verts/ALE)

Subject: Establishing an emissions control area in the Mediterranean

The 21st meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean was held in Naples in early December 2019. The meeting approved in principle the submission of an official request to the International Maritime Organization to establish a low sulphur oxide (SOx) emissions zone for shipping in the Mediterranean by 2022.

This is a step in the right direction, but the request should be accompanied by an initiative to establish a low nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions zone. There is a real possibility that, under the Barcelona Convention, the introduction of rules on the reduction of NOx levels in the Mediterranean will be postponed until some time in the distant future.

It is vital that an emissions control area be established in the Mediterranean as soon as possible to tackle the ongoing climate and public health emergencies: in March 2019, air pollution was found to be responsible for some 790 000 premature deaths per year in Europe.

What measures will the Commission take, and when, to reduce levels of SOx and NOx in the Mediterranean, specifically in European waters, at a time when the need to enforce European air quality directives has become urgent?