

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to the Commission statement

pursuant to Rule 37(2) of the Rules of Procedure

by Mr Pasqua and Mr Souchet

on behalf of the UEN Group

on the oil spill ravaging the French coast following the sinking of the oil tanker Erika

B5-0028/2000

Resolution on the oil spill ravaging the French coast following the sinking of the oil tanker Erika

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on marine and coastal pollution,
- A. whereas the seas help determine the ecological and climatic balance and are the basis for many economic activities,
- B. whereas large quantities of crude oil have been washed ashore along the Atlantic coast of France following the sinking of the Erika, a Maltese oil tanker, off Brittany on 12 December 1999,
- C. whereas the oil spill has badly affected fishing and shellfish-farming businesses on the coasts of Brittany and the Pays de la Loire region,
- D. whereas, on the Atlantic coast of Brittany and Pays de la Loire, the oil spill has affected environmentally very sensitive areas, and in particular nesting sites of protected bird species,
- E. whereas volunteers and nature conservancy organisations have so far counted over 25 000 oiled birds,
- F. whereas sea-based activities are a key part of the economic and social development of the areas affected,
- G. concerned at the ageing of the world's mercantile shipping fleet,
- H. recalling that the cost of pollution must be borne by those responsible and not by society as a whole, and that, in the case of maritime disasters, the concept of negligence must be extended to include the conditions under which vessels are chartered,
- 1. Congratulates the regional and local authorities, their elected representatives and the public services, who took very prompt action to deal with this disaster;
- 2. Pays tribute to the efforts of the volunteers and members of the armed forces taking part in the beach clean-up operations;
- 3. Welcomes the initiative taken by the council of the département of Vendée, which ordered the immediate drawing-up of an expert report on the state of beaches in its area so as to make the task of compensating those affected by the oil spill easier, thus showing it had learnt the lessons from previous oil spills;
- 4. Points out the scale of the oil spill's economic and ecological impact on the environment, tourism, fisheries, sea farming and saltwater aquaculture and fish-farming;

5. Denounces the effects of excessive liberalisation in the maritime transport sector, which has not been accompanied by a stepping-up of checks on compliance with safety standards for mercantile vessels;
6. Is alarmed at the consequences such uncontrolled liberalisation has had as regards the skills of crews serving on mercantile vessels;
7. Calls on the Commission to present, as a matter of urgency, specific initiatives designed to improve the safety of maritime transport by stepping up inspections on the basis of existing rules and, if need be, by adopting new measures relating to the age and technical characteristics (double hull, etc.) of vessels authorised to enter the Community's waters;
8. Hopes that the Commission will draw up as soon as possible a detailed report on the functioning of the various inspection bodies that are approved for the certification of mercantile vessels in Europe, and on the bodies responsible for port inspections;
9. Hopes also that the Commission will draw up concrete proposals for financing joint research concerning the treatment of water polluted by oil, ensuring in particular that greater attention is devoted to maritime transport as part of Community R&D programmes;
10. Condemns the flag of convenience system and calls on the Commission, when considering applications for EU membership from countries that allow their flags to be used for such purposes, to ensure that those countries undertake to comply strictly with Community rules;
11. Would like to see the Commission relax, by way of exception and in an appropriate manner, Community rules on competition so as allow public authorities to intervene financially to help the economies of the affected areas recover;
12. Calls on the Commission to suspend application of the multiannual guidance programmes (MGPs) in the areas affected by the oil spill;
13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the French government and the regional and local authorities concerned.