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## **MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION**

further to the Commission statement

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

by Monica Frassoni and Camilo Nogueira Román

on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

on the accident involving the oil tanker 'Prestige' off the coast of Galicia, the measures to be taken and the application of the Erika legislative package

**B5-0614/2002**

**European Parliament resolution on the accident involving the oil tanker 'Prestige' off the coast of Galicia, the measures to be taken and the application of the Erika legislative package**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Erika I and II packages proposed by the Commission with a view to establishing a Community framework for combating marine pollution as a result of accidents, packages which have been partly adopted by the Council,
- A. whereas the hull of the oil tanker 'Prestige', which is registered in the Bahamas and which was transporting fuel oil from Lithuania to Gibraltar, has broken up over the last few hours, and whereas Galicia, Portugal and their coastal waters are facing a major ecological and socio-economic disaster,
- B. whereas the fuel oil spilt from the tanker and the resulting oil slick which will affect the Galician and Portuguese coastlines could give rise to a disaster, in terms of the impact on biodiversity, even more serious than that caused by the sinking of the 'Erika' in late 1999,
- C. whereas the proposal to establish an additional compensation fund, COPE, to deal with oil-related accidents in EU waters has not yet been adopted by the Council of Ministers,
- D. whereas, by virtue of their geographical situation, Galicia and Brittany are the regions most vulnerable to maritime accidents, in particular involving oil tankers; whereas Galicia has recently been affected by other major accidents involving oil and chemicals (caused by the 'Urquiola', the 'Aegean Sea' and the 'Casón'), and whereas other accidents have narrowly been avoided,
- E. whereas the fishermen affected by the sinking of the 'Aegean Sea' in 1992 received compensation only one month ago,
- F. whereas the oil spill from the 'Prestige' is also causing substantial damage to marine fauna and flora, in particular in areas of ecological interest under the 'Natura 2000' programme,
- G. whereas the future of inshore fishing, which is already in decline as a result of economic problems, has been called into question by this accident, and whereas those with other marine-based occupations, such as oyster- and shellfish-farmers, who have already seen sales of their products fall, may lose several years' harvest,
- H. whereas the damage to the coastlines and beaches caused by the oil spill will leave tourism-related occupations facing losses on a scale which cannot easily be assessed,
- 1. Calls on the European Union, together with the Spanish and Galician Governments, to take account of the exceptional nature of the oil pollution which will be caused by the break-up of the oil tanker 'Prestige' and, in that connection, to take immediate measures to

limit the impact of that pollution and recover the fuel oil and to restore and safeguard the coastlines affected;

2. Calls for fisheries workers and other local and regional businesses affected by the accident to be fully and swiftly compensated for the economic losses they will suffer; calls, further, for exceptional aid measures to assist the nature conservation associations which have voluntarily and spontaneously taken on the task of collecting and cleaning birds and marine fauna;
3. Calls on the European Commission to conduct an inquiry to determine who was responsible for and the circumstances surrounding the accident, focusing on: the type of vessel and the causes of the accident, the origin and destination of the cargo, the degrees of responsibility borne by the shipping company, the captain of the vessel, the state in which the vessel was registered and the owner of the cargo, the individuals involved in the shipment of the fuel oil, the crew's working conditions, the quality of the inspections carried out, the ports used, and the degrees of responsibility borne by the state and regional authorities involved, and to inform Parliament of the outcome as soon as possible;
4. Emphasises that the damage caused by the accident could have been greatly reduced had the Spanish Government, working with the other governments concerned, taken more quickly the measures required to save the vessel's cargo;
5. Calls on the Commission, in cooperation with the state and regional authorities concerned, to draw up a protection, prevention and monitoring plan for maritime transport routes in the regions which are most vulnerable to accidents involving oil and chemicals (in particular Galicia and Brittany), given that those routes are used by very large numbers of vessels transporting oil or other hazardous substances;
6. Calls on the Council and the Member States to speed up the implementation of the measures adopted as part of the Erika I (introduction of double hulls, standards for vessels which visit Community ports, rules governing classification societies) and Erika II (monitoring, control and information system; maritime safety agency) packages proposed by the Commission;
7. Calls on the Council to speed up adoption of the European Commission proposal to establish a European compensation fund for oil pollution damage (COPE), a proposal which is still being considered by the Council following its adoption by Parliament at first reading (Esclopé report, 14 July 2001);
8. Calls on the European Union to introduce extraordinary measures to prevent dangerous vessels such as the 'Prestige' from using Community waters; calls, further, for the prompt application of the new rules banning vessels not fitted with double hulls from Community waters and, if necessary, for a revision of those rules with a view to tightening up the timetable for the phasing-out of single-hull vessels;
9. Points out that the polluter-pays principle, as enshrined in the Treaty on European Union, must be applied to the letter with a view to securing reparation for the short- and long-

term environmental damage caused and swift compensation for the losses suffered by those whose livelihoods depend on marine and tourism-related occupations;

10. Calls for a reform of the IMO rules under which decision-making power is currently allocated among States on the basis of the tonnage of their fleets, with the result that such power rests primarily with countries whose laws authorise flags of convenience;
11. Calls for the establishment, as a matter of urgency, of the European Maritime Safety Agency, a proposal put forward by the Commission as part of the Erika II package; when the Agency's seat is chosen, due account should be taken of the frequency of maritime accidents and the density of maritime traffic in the region concerned;
12. Calls on the European Union and the Member States to lend financial support to independent bodies which monitor the environment in maritime areas so that such bodies are no longer forced to seek funding from companies directly involved in the oil sector, as in the case of the CEDRE research centre, which was subsidised in part by TotalFina, the owner of the cargo transported by the Erika;
13. Calls on the Commission to take the measures required to improve the coordination of emergency and civil defence operations, in particular by drawing on the experience gained in the USA by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and by setting up a European coastguard service which would work in close cooperation with maritime traffic controllers in the regions concerned;
14. Draws attention to the urgent need for the European Union to review its energy policy and to give priority to sustainable forms of land transport, such as the railways, thereby reducing its dependence on oil;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the governments of the Member States, the regional governments concerned and the International Maritime Organisation.