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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to the Council and Commission statements

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

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on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

on the *Prestige* oil tanker accident

European Parliament resolution on the *Prestige* oil tanker accident

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on maritime safety,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the Copenhagen European Council of 12 and 13 December 2002,
 - having regard to Council Directive 76/464/EEC of 4 May 1976 on pollution caused by certain dangerous substances discharged into the aquatic environment of the Community,
 - having regard to the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on environmental liability with regard to the prevention and remedying of environmental damage,
 - having regard to the implementation of the Erika I and II packages,
- A. whereas the oil tanker *Prestige*, which is registered in the Bahamas and which was chartered by a Swiss company, sank on 19 November near the coast of Galicia, and whereas thousands of tonnes of crude oil have spilled into the sea and are continuing to pollute the Community coastline,
- B. having regard to the sinking of the Norwegian ship *Tricolor* off the coast of Dunkirk, with 200,000 tonnes of fuel on board,
- C. whereas fisheries, marine aquaculture and tourism are fundamental to the economic and social development of the areas affected, and whereas the oil slick will mean high costs for those who make their living from the sea, who will be forced to rebuild or replace means of production that have been destroyed or damaged,
- D. whereas very serious damage has been caused to fauna and to the environment of the region, and whereas the fisheries and aquaculture industry has been severely hit,
- E. whereas years of effort will be needed to repair the damage caused, to replace what has been destroyed and to win back consumer confidence,
- F. whereas maritime safety has not been sufficiently improved in recent years, and whereas not all of the lessons from previous accidents have been drawn at the Community and international levels,
- G. whereas the 25-year old oil tanker *Prestige* was not seaworthy,
- H. whereas vessels flying flags of convenience account for a significant proportion of the total number of shipwrecks recorded,

- I. whereas this disaster once again reveals a desire on the part of some ship-owners and oil companies to save on costs, a desire which is geared solely to generating profits to the detriment of safety, and which is reflected in particular in the use of flags of convenience, leading to a lowering of safety and social protection standards,
 - J. having regard to the disastrous way in which the crisis has been managed by the Spanish authorities,
 - K. whereas the task of the IOPCF is to provide funds in order to finance swift palliative measures to reduce damage to the coastline and compensate the victims of pollution; whereas the IOPCF is under-funded, with the result that damage cannot be made good and insufficient money is available to cover the costs of compensation,
1. Expresses its solidarity with, and support for, all of the victims of the oil pollution;
 2. Notes the initial decisions taken by the Commission, in particular the abolition of single-hull tankers and the publication of a blacklist of 66 vessels; nevertheless considers as highly inadequate the decisions taken by the Copenhagen European Council to improve maritime safety and the pollution prevention measures taken following the sinking of the *Prestige* oil tanker;
 3. Stresses the need to do everything possible to prevent the fuel oil remaining in the oil tanker's tanks from polluting both seas and coastline;
 4. Calls on the European Union to take immediate measures to limit the impact of the pollution and recover the fuel oil and to restore and safeguard the coastlines affected;
 5. Calls on the European Commission to conduct an inquiry to determine who was responsible for and the circumstances surrounding the disaster and the respective identities and roles of all of the individuals involved, focusing on: the type of vessel and the causes of the accident, the origin and destination of the shipment, 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 and the ports used, and to inform Parliament of the outcome as soon as possible, and to check the application of the standards governing the internal market, including the nature of the goods transported, and whether the fuel oil being transported was consistent with the relevant European standards;
 6. Deplores the disastrous way in which the crisis has been managed by the Spanish authorities;
 7. Calls for the Member States to introduce minimum standards for equipment for the prevention and monitoring of maritime pollution and deplores the negative approach adopted by Member States, which have failed to provide adequate resources to ensure proper high-quality safety controls;
 8. Is concerned at the absence of any proposals to combat the widespread use of flags of

convenience in maritime transport;

9. Condemns the results of the overly lax attitude adopted by the maritime transport industry, a sector in which safety standards and checks applying to merchant vessels and flags of convenience have not been adequately strengthened;
10. Calls for fisheries workers and other local and regional businesses affected by the disaster to be fully and swiftly compensated for the economic losses they will suffer; calls, further, for assistance to be provided under other appropriate instruments (Solidarity Fund, Structural Funds) with a view to assisting the people and economic sectors affected by the oil pollution and restoring the environment of the regions concerned;
11. Calls on the IOPCF to significantly raise its compensation ceilings;
12. Calls for implementation of the Erika I and II packages to be speeded up, for new specific measures designed to strengthen safety standards in the maritime transport sector to be adopted and for a ban to be introduced on the use of flags of convenience, which leads to a lowering of safety and social protection standards;
13. Calls in particular for a ban on the use of single-hull tankers more than 15 years old and for a special inspection certificate to be required for all vessels whose destination is a European port;
14. Believes that no substantial progress in maritime safety will be made unless decisions are taken to make those actually responsible pay the full cost of these disasters, namely ship-owners, charterers, cargo owners and classification societies; calls therefore on the Commission to draw up a regulation to this effect without delay;
15. Calls on the Member States to speed up the ratification of IMO conventions which are still pending and to ensure that IMO resolutions are incorporated into the conventions in such a way as to make them binding;
16. Calls for a plan of authorised shipping routes in European Union waters to be drawn up for the transport of dangerous or pollutant substances;
17. Calls on the IMO to:
 - strengthen international rules on maritime safety and environmental protection by:
 - laying down genuinely deterrent penalties for ship-owners and charterers who fail to comply with safety standards or who carry out unauthorised emptying of tanks;
 - introducing a requirement for measures to be taken to safeguard sinking vessels until the last moment and prohibit the abandonment of such vessels at sea, requiring them to be brought into harbour instead;
 - prohibiting the flying of flags of convenience;
18. Calls for trade unions and associations to be involved in the drawing up and

implementation of new specific measures to improve maritime safety;

19. Calls on the Commission to encourage research or implementation measures to develop maritime safety standards and improve maritime materials and technology, in particular by introducing a requirement for vessels transporting pollutant or dangerous substances to have a dual propulsion system in addition to the requirement for tankers to be equipped with double hulls;
20. Supports the establishment of a parliamentary committee of inquiry into the current crisis, and its ongoing causes, the failure to take decisions on the matter and the delay in transposing provisions;
21. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council and the governments of the Member States and the applicant countries.