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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 PPE-DE Group

on safety at sea and measures to alleviate the effects of the “Prestige” oil tanker disaster

European Parliament resolution on safety at sea and measures to alleviate the effects of the “Prestige” oil tanker disaster

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolution of 21 Nov 2002 on the "Prestige" oil tanker disaster off the coast of Galicia, and to its earlier resolution on safety at sea,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 3 December 2002 on improving safety at sea in response to the Prestige accident (COM(2002) 681) and to the various initiatives seeking to improve safety at sea,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the Transport Council of 6 December 2002 and of the Environment Council of 9 December 2002,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the Copenhagen European Council of 12 and 13 December 2002 ,
- A. whereas the oil slick produced by the wreck of the "Prestige" on 19 Nov 2002 has led to serious pollution on the coasts of Galicia and may also, depending on the direction of currents, affect parts of the Portuguese and French coasts,
- B. having regard to the consequences and environmental, economic and social damage caused by this disaster to the people of Galicia, as well as to the economic harm done to marine workers, particularly shellfish and oyster farmers,
- C. having regard to the efforts made by the people affected by the oil slick, and by institutions, and civil society, and to the solidarity shown by many Member States of the EU in cleaning up the polluted areas,
- D. whereas on 6 December 2002 the Transport Council decided to adopt further measures to step up safety at sea and to implement them as soon as possible along the lines proposed by the Commission and the European Parliament when they adopted the Erika I and II packages,
- E. having regard to the conclusions of the environment Council of 9 December 2002 on measures to prevent pollution and on the need to involve non-EU countries – particularly the candidate countries and Russia – in agreements making it possible to ban single-hull oil tankers from their harbours and anchorages, and to its own petition seeking to create a European Union of sensitive sea fishing areas with a view to giving them special protection,
- F. having regard to the current investigations on the wreck of the "Prestige" and in particular to that by the “ABS” classification society, which has already carried out a vertical audit to check whether there was any negligence in the annual inspection on the structure of the hull of the "Prestige" of 25 May 2002,

- G. whereas it is necessary to put in place adequate instruments to ensure that European standards are effectively applied so that this type of disaster does not recur,
1. Expresses its solidarity with and support for the victims of this disaster and the states and regions affected, and pays tribute to the way in which the civilian population and institutions mobilised to clean up in the polluted areas affected by the oil slick, and to the many EU Member States which made vessels and technical equipment available to help recover oil from the open sea and inspect the wreck of the "Prestige";
 2. Congratulates the Commission on the speed with which it submitted new initiatives to step up safety at sea at European and international level;
 3. Welcomes the fact that the European Council has taken over the conclusions of the Transport Council of 6 December 2002 and the Environment Council of 9 December 2002 regarding the adoption as soon as possible of measures to step up safety at sea and prevent pollution, so as to avoid such disasters recurring; stresses that it would also be appropriate to work towards the establishment of a genuine European civil force which could intervene in case of disasters;
 4. Looks to the Commission to submit to it new proposals for directives on safety at sea to enable it to issue an opinion on this matter;
 5. Recognises the urgent need to adopt without further delay new measures to amend the international law of the sea and rules governing marine transport, and reaffirms its conviction that the adoption and application of such measures will represent considerable progress in terms of safety at sea;
 6. Supports the measures taken by the Commission to help fishermen, and those involved in aquaculture, who have been affected by the oil slick; calls on the Commission, as was also stressed by the European Council in Copenhagen, to look very closely at the possibility of using any possible financial instruments to tackle the economic, social and environmental consequences of the wreck of the "Prestige" and assist in the economic sectors affected by this disaster;
 7. Also calls on the Commission to examine the possibilities offered by the Council regulation of 11 November 2002 establishing the European Union solidarity fund, so that it may be applied to this kind of disaster with a view to helping the people affected by the oil slick;
 8. Welcomes the Commission's participation in the audit which has been undertaken by the "ABS" classification society;
 9. Calls on the European sea safety agency to adopt without delay a work programme to enable it to become operational as soon as possible;
 10. Calls on its committee on transport to organise, with the involvement of the other committees concerned, a hearing on safety at sea and the causes of accidents at sea with the participation of the authorities responsible and experts in the area;

11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the governments of the Member States and candidate states, the authorities of Galicia and of the regions affected by the disaster and to all the relevant marine authorities.