

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3625/02

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to the Council

Subject: Safety at sea

The regulatory and legislative measures adopted after the Erika disaster three years ago have not been sufficient to prevent another, unprecedented, maritime disaster in the EU.

Although it had a single hull and was 26 years old, the oil tanker Prestige had not been inspected since 1999. In view of this latest accident, does the Council intend, at the European summit in mid-December, to propose bringing forward the timetable laid down by the regulation on the accelerated phasing-in of double-hull or equivalent design standards for single-hull oil tankers and to ban all single-hull oil and chemical tankers from European coastal waters, in particular near the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts, with immediate effect?

When the Erika I and II packages were finalised, the Fifteen approved the principle of a political commitment by the EU Member States to apply the measures they contained immediately, before the directives were transposed. What means is the Council prepared to employ to ensure that this actually happens?

It appears from initial enquiries that the Prestige had set off from Saint Petersburg and was bound for Singapore. It is therefore not solely a European responsibility to ensure that the principles of maritime safety are observed, and local action should not preclude global action. Is the Council in favour of convening an urgent meeting with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in order to put in place the preconditions for legislation at world level?

What is the Council's position with regard to a strategy modelled on 'closer cooperation' between some Member States with regard to safety at sea? Would the Council be prepared to accept that a requirement for double-hull vessels be immediately applicable in some particularly sensitive maritime areas, such as the Mediterranean?