

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1509/04
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to the Commission

Subject: Checks on ships carrying hazardous substances

On 21 December 2003, in a very severe storm north-west of the Netherlands island of Texel, the Ethiopian-registered ship Andinet, which was travelling from Antwerp to Bremen, lost three containers (holding a total of 630 drums) and 63 loose drums containing wood pesticide, a mixture of 24% arsenic pentoxide, 34% chromium trioxide and 14% copper dioxide. In addition, during the storm the contents of some 50 drums of this poisonous substance (5 000 litres) spilled into the sea. The Commission's answer to an earlier question (P-0123/04¹) prompts the following supplementary questions:

1. Does the Commission share our view that a Europe-wide ban should be imposed on ships carrying hazardous substances leaving port in bad weather and does it plan to put forward relevant proposals?
2. According to the Commission, what are the decisive arguments in favour of anything but blanket checks on ships' cargoes, followed by additional checks on the way hazardous cargoes have been stowed?
3. Does the Commission share our view that a harmonised European approach is required, given that a failure to act or inadequate action by one Member State results in damage to the environment in another Member State?

¹ OJ C