

**Question for written answer E-008880/2011  
to the Commission**

Rule 117

**Fiona Hall (ALDE), Diana Wallis (ALDE) and Kathleen Van Brempt (S&D)**

Subject: Arctic oil drilling and spill response

Receding summer ice in the Arctic, due to man-made climate change, has meant that oil and gas companies are exploring Arctic waters for future drilling. Despite the greater environmental risk, concerns have been expressed that some companies are sometimes operating to lower safety and transparency standards than customary in EU countries. For example, Cairn Energy, a Scottish company involved in exploratory drilling operations off Greenland, is reported not to have been obliged to disclose its emergency response plan in the event of an oil spill, or provide proof of adequate financial cover to clean up after a spill.

1. Does the Commission agree that drilling in the Arctic presents unique challenges, since a spill in icy conditions would be very difficult to clean up, and that the industry has little experience of meeting those challenges?
2. Does the Commission agree therefore that Arctic drilling should only take place when and where the oil industry is technically and financially capable of adequately dealing with the control and management of an Arctic spill?
3. Does the Commission agree that companies with headquarters in the EU should be held to the highest safety and transparency standards wherever they operate?
4. Will the Commission require any EU company already operating in the Arctic, including in the form of oil prospecting, to publish their spill response plan?
5. Will the Commission propose legal measures requiring that companies with headquarters in the EU adhere to EU standards, or to the standards of their home country, also when operating outside EU waters, as announced in the Commission's Communication COM/2010/0560 of 12 October 2010?
6. In addition to that, will the Commission work with EU partners and neighbours to achieve a special regime for any operations in the Arctic, having careful regard as to the sustainability and necessity of offshore activities in such a vulnerable and unique environment?