

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0140/06
by Anne Ferreira (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Dismantling of the French aircraft carrier Clémenceau in India

On 31 December 2005 the former French navy aircraft carrier left the port of Toulon for India, where it will be dismantled.

The French Government has given assurances that 90% of the removal of asbestos from the Clémenceau has been carried out and 105 tonnes remain on the ship. However, there is some uncertainty about these figures, as the anti-asbestos and environmental protection associations estimate a much higher weight of residual asbestos.

In Europe, dismantling of vessels involving asbestos removal does not pose any technical problems but it is expensive. In India, cheap labour and work under poor safety conditions permit cheaper processing. This kind of work presents serious risks for Indian workers' health and for the environment.

The French decision infringes international rules, in particular the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, ratified by France in 1989, which the European Union is preparing to incorporate into its legislation.

At a time when asbestos is killing thousands of people a year in Europe and the world, this decision is unacceptable. The fact that it relates to war material used for carrying weapons and not 'waste', as the government points out, is not sufficient justification.

That is why I wonder about the Commission's options for action in this matter. Is it possible to ban or suspend this 'shipment' under Community legislation? Are other organisations able to act to prevent it?

To what extent is the European Union able to take responsibility for this type of operation?