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TEXTS ADOPTED

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**P10\_TA(2024)0036**

**EU actions against the Russian shadow fleets and ensuring a full enforcement of sanctions against Russia**

**European Parliament resolution of 14 November 2024 on EU actions against the Russian shadow fleets and ensuring a full enforcement of sanctions against Russia (2024/2885(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Russia and Ukraine, in particular since the escalation of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine in February 2022,
  - having regard to the 14 consecutive packages of sanctions against Russia adopted by the EU since February 2022,
  - having regard to the Charter of the United Nations and to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea,
  - having regard to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, the International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage and other relevant International Maritime Organization (IMO) conventions,
  - having regard to IMO General Assembly Resolution A.1192(33) entitled ‘Urging Member States and all relevant stakeholders to promote actions to prevent illegal operations in the maritime sector by the “dark fleet” or “shadow fleet”’, adopted on 6 December 2023,
  - having regard to the G7 leaders’ statement of 6 December 2023,
  - having regard to Rules 136(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Russia has been carrying out an illegal, unprovoked and unjustified full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine since 24 February 2022, continuing what it started in 2014 when it annexed Crimea and subsequently occupied parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions; whereas since its outset, the EU has strongly condemned Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine and has called on Russia to put an end to these aggressions and respect Ukraine’s territorial integrity;

- B. whereas Russia is one of the world's largest oil producers; whereas Russia is heavily dependent on sales of oil in terms of export earnings and budget revenues, making oil a key source of financing for its war in Ukraine;
- C. whereas the EU and the other members of the G7+ Price Cap Coalition established a price cap on Russian-origin crude oil and petroleum products with the aim of maintaining global supplies, while limiting the revenue streams used by Russia to finance its war of aggression against Ukraine; whereas, in response, Russia has spent an estimated EUR 9 billion on building up its 'shadow fleet'; whereas oil tankers filled with Russian oil sail through European waters every day as part of Russia's efforts to evade EU and G7 sanctions;
- D. whereas since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the EU has imposed massive and unprecedented restrictive measures and sanctions against Russia, with the aim of undermining Russia's economic, financial and military ability to sustain its war effort; whereas the Council's sixth package of sanctions, among other things, prohibits the purchase, import and transfer of seaborne crude oil and certain petroleum products from Russia to the EU; whereas the Council's 11th and 12th sanctions packages address circumvention risks posed by the 'shadow fleet'; whereas in its 14th package of sanctions on Russian oil, the Council introduced a new measure targeting specific vessels contributing to Russia's war against Ukraine, which are subject to a port access ban and a ban on the provision of services; whereas so far, the EU has placed only 27 vessels on this list, including tankers transporting Russian oil and engaging in dangerous and illegal shipping practices; whereas in October 2024, the UK Government imposed sanctions against 18 Russian oil tankers and 4 liquefied natural gas (LNG) tankers; whereas to date, the act of designating 'shadow fleet' vessels has had the biggest impact on 'shadow fleet' operations;
- E. whereas 'shadow fleets' have already been used by hostile countries such as Iran, Venezuela and North Korea; whereas, however, the scale and sophistication of Russia's operations set it apart as Russia's 'shadow fleet' is estimated to operate around 160-200 tankers monthly to transport oil, with an estimated total fleet of 600 vessels that play a key role in sustaining Russian crude exports;
- F. whereas the 'shadow fleet' used by Russia as a workaround has significantly reduced the leverage of the sanctions regime and has allowed Russia to further use these revenues to finance its war of aggression against Ukraine and underlines the need to strengthen and broaden international coordination of sanctions;
- G. whereas the 'shadow fleet' is estimated to number at least 600 tankers worldwide; whereas these are older tankers, often sailing without industry standard insurance and frequently changing names and flag registrations, enabling Russia to sell a significant portion of its oil above the price cap and undermining the ability of governments to hold the owners of the tankers liable for clean-up in the event of oil spills; whereas these ships are generally unfit for service and contribute to the rising risk of maritime collisions on international trade routes, thereby posing a serious environmental hazard due to the high risk of oil spills harming marine ecosystems and coastal areas, including in marine protected areas with particularly sensitive wildlife, where oil spills would have disastrous consequences; whereas experience with past oil spills caused by tankers shows that damage to coastal and underwater ecosystems, as well as to surface-dwelling animals and seabirds, can last for decades; whereas expanding the fleet of the European

Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) with additional response vessels would align with the EU's commitment to environmental protection, resilience under the European Green Deal and the objectives of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism to enhance rapid response and disaster-preparedness capabilities;

- H. whereas the Russian 'shadow tankers' regularly conduct ship-to-ship transfers of Russian crude oil and oil products in territorial waters, including in the Mediterranean Sea; whereas in these operations, they transfer and blend Russian oil between vessels without docking at any port in order to conceal the origin of the oil; whereas the proximity of these operations to the coast poses a high risk of environmental damage; whereas their satellite-based Automatic Identification System (AIS) transponders are often switched off in order to evade monitoring and official inspections; whereas the coastal countries of Europe would be particularly affected; whereas, should accidents occur, oil spills from 'shadow fleet' vessels could result in clean-up costs amounting to billions of euro for coastal countries and their taxpayers, as the owners of these vessels are largely untraceable; whereas oil spills can also incur significant economic losses, including from the decline in tourism and fishing activities; whereas such spills pose significant threats to water quality and local wildlife, harming marine ecosystems, contaminating consumer products such as shellfish and thus posing a threat to human health, spreading further contamination and disrupting fish reproduction;
- I. whereas the intentional overboard discharge of waste oil slops is illegal under MARPOL, an international treaty that aims to curb shipping pollution; whereas Russia is a signatory of MARPOL; whereas there is evidence of violations of MARPOL; whereas sanctioning individual ships has proved effective, as the ships that have already been blacklisted saw their ability to trade oil decrease after they were penalised;
- J. whereas Directive 2009/20/EC<sup>1</sup> on the insurance of shipowners for maritime claims has been in place since 2009, ensuring that all ships flying the flag of an EU Member State have insurance and carry insurance certificates; whereas one of the objectives of Directive 2009/20/EC was the elimination of substandard ships; whereas the International Convention Relating to Intervention on the High Seas in Cases of Oil Pollution Casualties allows countries 'to prevent, mitigate or eliminate grave and imminent danger to their coastline or related interests from pollution or threat of pollution of the sea by oil, following upon a maritime casualty or acts related to such a casualty';
- K. whereas recent reports from the Swedish Navy have highlighted the security risks linked to the activities of the 'shadow fleet' and its possible use in hybrid operations against European countries;
- L. whereas despite the ban on imports of oil products refined in Russia, there is no ban on imports from third-country refineries that process Russian crude oil; whereas the 'shadow fleet' delivers Russian crude oil to third-country refineries; whereas EU and G7 countries continue to import oil products derived from Russian oil, for instance from refineries in Türkiye;

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<sup>1</sup> Directive 2009/20/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the insurance of shipowners for maritime claims, OJ L 131, 28.5.2009, p. 128, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2009/20/oj>.

- M. whereas the traffic of such vessels has risen dramatically in the course of 2024, with the number of trips completed by Russian ‘shadow vessels’ more than doubling; whereas a significant portion of the Russian oil is transported through busy international shipping routes; whereas Russia ships the overwhelming majority of its oil from ports in the Baltic and Black Seas;
- N. whereas those transporting the oil and managing the ‘shadow fleet’ do not act in isolation; whereas their activities are interconnected with the financial transactions that support them; whereas these transactions may involve entities subject to financial sanctions; whereas compliance with the sanctions regime should be analysed from a holistic perspective to avoid circumvention;
- O. whereas ship operators have been willing to flout the sanctions by registering their vessels in countries that are not part of the price cap agreement; whereas Russia uses third-country intermediaries, organisations or individuals to purchase some ‘shadow fleet’ tankers; whereas some owners and managers of ‘shadow fleet’ tankers and gas carriers are also registered in EU Member States;
- P. whereas Russia’s ‘shadow fleet’ relies heavily on the complicity and collaboration of several countries to bypass sanctions, especially China, India and Türkiye;
1. Reiterates its condemnation, in the strongest terms, of Russia’s unprovoked, illegal and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine; calls on Russia to immediately terminate all military activities in Ukraine and to completely and unconditionally withdraw all forces, proxies and military equipment from the entire internationally recognised territory of Ukraine, to end its forced deportations of Ukrainian civilians and to release all detained and deported Ukrainians, particularly children;
  2. Reiterates its unequivocal support for the EU sanctions regime, which aims to undermine the capacity of the Russian regime to pursue its war of aggression against Ukraine; underlines that the objective of EU sanctions in response to Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine is to strategically weaken the Russian economic and industrial base, in particular the military-industrial complex, in order to undermine the ability of the Russian Federation to continue waging the war, attacking the civilian population and violating the territorial integrity of Ukraine, as well as to hamper Russia’s access to military technologies and components; notes that Russia is actively circumventing EU sanctions and seeking new ways to do so, inter alia, by operating a ‘shadow fleet’ of oil tankers and may therefore still be able to intensify its war efforts against Ukraine in the short term, especially during the upcoming winter season;
  3. Considers the ‘shadow fleet’ a key financial lifeline for Russia in its illegal and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine and a major tool created to circumvent the EU sanctions regime; denounces the risk these unsafe and uninsured Russian vessels pose to maritime security and to our European coastal Member States and marine ecosystems; condemns Russia for deliberately creating immense risks for its own financial gain, with no regard for international safety or the potential for irreversible environmental damage; calls for the EU and its Member States to intensify their efforts to curb sanctions evasion and circumvention by Russia, and to implement concrete measures to ensure maritime safety and prevent environmental hazards in European waters, in particular in the Baltic Sea; considers ship-to-ship transfers in the high seas to be high-risk activities that undermine international maritime safety and environmental

protection;

4. Calls for more targeted sanctions on the ‘shadow fleet’ in the next sanctions packages against Russia, such as designating all individual ‘shadow fleet’ vessels, as well as their owners, operators, managers, accounts, banks, insurance companies, etc.; calls for an immediate ban on the use of Western vessels in the transport of Russian oil; calls, more broadly, for the next EU sanctions packages to include the systematic sanctioning of vessels sailing through EU waters without known insurance in order to protect our waters and avoid the financial burdens of oil spill clean-ups; urges the European External Action Service and the EU Sanctions Envoy to reach out to the governments of the countries where the companies managing the ‘shadow tankers’ are registered and of the countries whose flag presence has increased substantially in EU waters since the imposition of the oil price cap; calls for the EU and its Member States to approach these flag states to inform them about the basis of the listings and the consequences of a potential listing, highlight the risks and adverse environmental impact of irregular and high-risk shipping practices and remind them of flag states’ responsibilities; urges flag states to delist sanctioned vessels from their ship registries;
5. Notes that the flag states aiding the Russian ‘shadow fleet’ are thereby also helping the Russian war effort; emphasises that if classical diplomatic efforts fail, the EU should seriously reassess its bilateral cooperation with non-EU countries that are helping Russia circumvent EU sanctions;
6. Condemns the involvement of European shipowners in the creation of Russia’s ‘shadow fleet’; condemns the behaviour of states, legal service providers and other entities and individuals that help Russia to evade or mitigate EU sanctions; recalls that the violation of the sanctions is a crime at EU level, and has a severe impact on EU financial interests; calls for broadening and enforcing restrictions on vessel sales and for tanker sales to countries facilitating trade with Russia to be banned;
7. Calls for enhanced EU-wide measures to ensure stricter enforcement and the expansion of sanctions, including the immediate inspection of vessels operating in EU waters in order to verify their insurance coverage and compliance with IMO requirements; calls on the Member States to assess and strengthen their administrative capacities to ensure swift implementation and strict enforcement of EU sanctions;
8. Calls on the Commission to take action, under the framework of the EU’s cooperation with the IMO, to prevent and limit the activities of the ‘shadow fleet’; calls for the strict implementation of IMO General Assembly Resolution A.1192(33), which was adopted in December 2023 to combat harmful maritime operations, notably the obligation for vessels to report all ship-to-ship transfers to their flag states and enhanced inspections, at ports, of suspicious ships; calls for the EU and its Member States to restrict Russian ‘shadow fleet’ vessels from accessing EU waters; emphasises that the European Maritime Safety Agency must be used to its full potential in order to support Member States in identifying ships falling under sanctions and monitoring the movement of suspicious ships; calls, in particular, for the EU to establish a comprehensive list of vessels belonging to the Russian ‘shadow fleet’, to conduct targeted inspections, including at sea, and impose sanctions that also result in vessels being permanently or temporarily blocked for administrative reasons;
9. Calls for the EU and its Member States to closely monitor the implementation of

Directive 2009/20/EC on the insurance of shipowners for maritime claims, so as to prevent uninsured vessels from sailing through EU waters; stresses the need for strengthened enforcement mechanisms, such as enabling EU Member States to prevent uninsured or non-compliant vessels from docking at EU ports or using EU waters for refuelling or other services, and increasing the monitoring of such vessels; calls on the Member States to take action to ensure that non-compliant vessels are not made available on the market;

10. Encourages the Member States to cooperate closely with the United Kingdom on measures to restrict the use of the English Channel by Russian 'shadow fleet' vessels; calls for countries with international straits to require ships to demonstrate proof of protection and indemnity insurance and their adherence to minimum safety standards; calls on all Member States to require the disclosure of oil spill insurance coverage from all vessels passing through their waters to ensure transparency regarding insurance arrangements;
11. Encourages the EU and its Member States to enhance surveillance capabilities, especially drone and satellite monitoring, including through the use of Sentinel satellite imagery, in order to identify 'shadow fleet' vessels in EU waters and monitor activities, such as ship-to-ship transfers in violation of EU directives and MARPOL, and to promptly investigate when risks to coastal areas and marine ecosystems arise;
12. Calls for ship-to-ship transfers of Russian crude oil and oil products in EU waters to be banned; requests that the necessary resources to identify and hinder these transfer operations be deployed, including by prohibiting the anchoring and fuelling of all such ships in EU waters;
13. Calls on the Member States to enforce strict regulatory measures at their ports and in their territorial waters; urges the Member States, in the case of tankers potentially carrying Russian oil, to make full use of their right to have vessels guided by an on-board pilot from the relevant national authority to conduct checks on the origins of the cargo, ultimate ship ownership, insurance papers and compliance with safety standards, and to ensure that vessels suspected of sanctions evasion and environmental non-compliance are flagged for investigation;
14. Calls on the Member States to designate ports capable of handling sanctioned vessels carrying crude oil and LNG and to seize illegal cargo without compensation;
15. Stresses that the impact of existing sanctions and financial and military support to Ukraine will continue to be undermined as long as the EU continues to import Russian fossil fuels; calls, therefore, for the EU and its Member States to ban all imports of Russian fossil fuels, including LNG; calls for the EU to impose the requirement that vessels exporting Russian LNG be included on the EU sanctions list, denying them access to EU ports and maritime services; calls for the EU and its Member States to ban the import of Russian nuclear products and urges the Member States not to conclude any new agreements with Rosatom, or its leadership and subsidiaries;
16. Calls on the G7 countries to more effectively enforce the price cap imposed on Russian seaborne oil, to substantially decrease the oil price cap and to crack down on the loopholes used by Russia to repackage and sell its oil and oil products at market prices; calls for the EU, its Member States and its G7 partners to enhance their cooperation

with trading partners to more swiftly and effectively identify buyers of Russian oil and to cease purchasing oil products from them; calls for these designated facilities to be included on the targeted sanctions list and for a full ban to be introduced on re-exported Russian refined oil products; calls for harmonised testing of the origin of fossil fuel, LNG and refined fossil fuel imports to prevent the re-export of Russian energy to the EU; calls on the Member States to thoroughly investigate companies' compliance with export restrictions on listed goods and to impose dissuasive penalties;

17. Strongly recommends that the EU and its G7 partners significantly expand their sanctions lists to include additional vessels that circumvent their price caps and operate without respecting international standards; calls for the EU and partner countries to diligently verify the adequacy of insurance covering oil spills when applying the sanctions framework, for instance when providing or renewing registrations; calls for enhanced due diligence requirements for obtaining insurance for vessels, such as proof of sales contracts compliant with the price cap or reliable, verified bank statements, etc.;
18. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure sufficient environmental disaster preparedness, especially for large oil spills, and to ensure that Member State authorities cooperate closely, both together and with the European Maritime Safety Agency, to deal with large-scale, cross-border pollution disasters, including by continuing to coordinate inventories of equipment needed for clean-ups; highlights that incidents of this nature will result in severe long-term environmental degradation, which could in turn significantly affect the tourism, fishing and marine industries in the Member States bordering the affected seas; calls on the Commission to provide additional funding to secure sufficient oil spill response vessels for the European Maritime Safety Agency;
19. Calls on the Commission to ensure the effective implementation and enforcement of Directive 2009/123/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2005/35/EC on ship-source pollution and on the introduction of penalties for infringements<sup>1</sup>; calls on the Member States to promptly transpose and implement Directive (EU) 2024/1226 on the definition of criminal offences and penalties for the violation of Union restrictive measures<sup>2</sup> and to ensure that adequate financial, technical and human resources are in place to properly enforce EU restrictive measures;
20. Encourages the Member States and the Commission to work with international partners and stakeholders, including in the shipping, energy, insurance and financial sectors, to identify best practices for detecting and addressing sanctions evasion and mitigating environmental impacts in EU waters;
21. Calls on the Commission to develop clearer guidelines and more robust due diligence standards for EU companies and financial institutions to avoid unintended interactions

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<sup>1</sup> Directive 2009/123/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 amending Directive 2005/35/EC on ship-source pollution and on the introduction of penalties for infringements, OJ L 280, 27.10.2009, p. 52, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2009/123/oj>.

<sup>2</sup> Directive (EU) 2024/1226 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 April 2024 on the definition of criminal offences and penalties for the violation of Union restrictive measures and amending Directive (EU) 2018/1673, OJ L, 2024/1226, 29.4.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1226/oj>.

with entities linked to ‘shadow fleets’;

22. Calls for support for the work of the EU Sanctions Envoy on anti-circumvention in order to prevent the systematic re-export of sanctioned EU goods to Russia, which is seriously undermining the effectiveness of EU sanctions and obstructing international efforts to end the war; calls, in this respect, for all candidate and potential candidate countries for EU accession to strictly align with EU sanctions in response to Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine as a sign of their readiness to take on the obligations of EU membership; reiterates its call on the Council to expand the powers of the European Public Prosecutor’s Office in order to address the crime of violation of EU restrictive measures; calls for the EU and its Member States to reinforce and centralise, at EU level, the oversight of sanctions implementation and to develop a mechanism to prevent and monitor sanctions circumvention;
23. Encourages global transparency standards in vessel registration to reduce reliance on shell companies and flags of convenience, in order to improve vessel ownership transparency;
24. Calls on the Commission to examine the adoption of trade policy tools similar to those employed by the United States, focusing on actors that gain market advantages because of sanctions regimes and may operate unfairly within the EU market as a result;
25. Expresses concern over the reported surplus in Russian oil production, which considerably exceeds Russia’s quota set by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries Plus (OPEC+), further enabling circumvention of the established price cap and allowing Russia to generate additional revenue; calls for the EU and its Member States to closely monitor the situation and to take appropriate action in cooperation with the EU’s international partners;
26. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the President, Government and Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the International Maritime Organization and the Russian authorities.