

European NGO Platform on Shipbreaking



Press Release
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For immediate release

The NGO Platform on Shipbreaking applauds the Bangladeshi government's decision demanding full decontamination of the SS Norway.

Brussels, 17 February 2006: A coalition of environmental, anti asbestos and human rights organisations today celebrate a further victory in the battle to prevent toxic end-of-life ships being sent to developing countries for shipbreaking. Following the French government's decision to take back the asbestos laden ex-aircraft carrier Clemenceau, the Bangladeshi Minister of Environment announced yesterday that his government will not let another notoriously contaminated ship, the SS Norway, enter his country's waters before it has been fully decontaminated. The wreck contains 1,250 tonnes of asbestos and other toxics on board. The government took this decision after the director of Giri Subedar Ship Breaking Yard announced, on Wednesday, that the contract for the purchase of the Norway had been finalised.

Like the Clemenceau, the Norway – as long as not fully decontaminated - is to be considered hazardous waste as defined in the Basel Convention and Council Regulation (EEC) 259/93/EEC on Shipments of Waste. Both cases indicate that India and Bangladesh are ready to send a clear signal to Europe, and the rest of the OECD countries, that decontamination of ships domestically is needed before export.

The NGO Platform applauds their efforts to protect the environment and workers' health from asbestos, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), heavy metals and other toxic wastes. We also welcome President Chirac's initiative to find both international and European solutions, and call on the EU to ensure proper follow-up so that the waste problems are not simply exported to vulnerable workers and the environment in the developing world's shipbreaking yards.

End-of-life ships are the most significant stream of illegal waste exports from Europe to poorer countries in Asia, leaving them with a toxic waste and occupational health management burden violating the principles of human rights, environmental justice, "polluter pays" and producer responsibility. So that ships can be scrapped in an environmentally sound and safe manner, other shipbreaking countries should echo Bangladesh's decision and shipowners should take responsibility for their waste by fully decontaminating their vessels before sending them to Asian shipbreaking yards.

The NGO Platform on Shipbreaking will continue to work for this on a global scaleⁱ.

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ⁱ Note to the editor: The European NGO Platform on Shipbreaking was established at the beginning of 2005. The following NGOs: **The Bellona Foundation, The European Federation for Transport and Environment, North Sea Foundation, Greenpeace, International Ban Asbestos Secretariat, International Federation for Human Rights and Association pour le Paquebot France.**