



Recommendation 1227 (1993)¹

Pollution of the seas

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly, recalling the loss of the tanker Braer and the alarming number of accidental hydrocarbon spillages and consequent catastrophes, underlines the urgent necessity to adopt co-ordinated measures to improve maritime safety and to reduce dramatically the risk of oil pollution around the coasts of Europe.
2. The Assembly recalls that while the large-scale disasters capture the headlines because of their dramatic impact on the environment, it should not be forgotten that smaller oil spillages or acts of pollution are far more frequent and deserving of public concern.
3. The Assembly reiterates that oil pollution brings with it the danger of grave, and in many cases irreversible, consequences for the ecosystem, representing a direct threat to marine creatures and their natural habitats and therefore to a major resource.
4. The Assembly therefore draws attention to the consequences of oil spillages on commercial activities within stricken areas for whose inhabitants sea-related activities may represent the principal source of livelihood.
5. The Assembly considers that the existing international agreements constitute a satisfactory framework, the main problem being the inadequate and uneven implementation and reinforcement by states of the rules that have been agreed.
6. While emphasising that the global dimension of shipping requires action on the widest possible geographical scale, the Assembly considers it appropriate that the regulations relating to maritime safety and environmental protection should continue to be promoted and adopted at international level, through the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), but the Assembly also welcomes "regional" agreements relating to maritime safety and particularly to monitoring systems, as a means of improving the global legal framework and its efficiency.
7. In this context, the Assembly welcomes the proposal of the Council of Europe's Secretary General following the Braer accident to organise, in co-operation with the International Maritime Organisation, a pan-European conference on the safety of tankers.
8. The Assembly also welcomes the communication from the Commission of the European Communities on "A common policy on safe seas" and hopes that Community-binding legal instruments will result from this initiative.
9. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers:
 - 9.1. put into action the proposal of the Council of Europe's Secretary General to organise a pan-European conference on the safety of tankers;
 - 9.2. invite the IMO and the EC to consider the questions concerning maritime safety with a view to securing the progress which is urgently required, notably with regard to setting up an international system to keep vessels at sea under surveillance;

1. See [Doc. 6959](#), report of the Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities, Rapporteur: Mr Hardy. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 4 November 1993.



- 9.3. invite member states to take all possible legislative, administrative and technical measures:
- a. to ensure adequate and even implementation and enforcement of existing international rules in the field of maritime safety;
 - b. to ratify all the IMO's conventions and protocols thereto;
 - c. to implement the Assembly's recommendations;
 - d. to set up "no-go zones" for tankers and other ships with dangerous cargoes, so that these vessels are not allowed to pursue courses which bring significant additional peril to those on board, or to those maritime states which could be harmed by disaster;
 - e. to ensure a tighter and more effective system of ship inspection;
 - f. to provide adequate port facilities, especially for tank-cleaning, and ensure that these are utilised;
 - g. to replace ageing or out-dated tankers and other vessels and to encourage the construction of ships designed to give absolute priority to safety;
 - h. to ensure that each member state possesses appropriate disaster control capacity to respond efficiently to emergencies, and to provide resources to enable rescue procedures to be carried out;
 - i. to ensure that, where a ship flies a flag of convenience, the condition of that vessel is required to meet the standards of either the country under whose flag it sails, or the country in which the company owning the vessel is based, whichever is the higher;
 - j. to improve crew training and qualification standards;
 - k. to introduce and enforce strict liability laws and tougher sanctions;
 - l. to raise insurance cover above the level presently required, in order to match the possible cost of ecological recovery of the affected areas, as well as the loss of profit suffered by the local communities where accidents happen;
 - m. to study the regulations in order to deter the premature abandonment of any vessel, especially if it could be considered that the vessel is worth as much sunk as it is afloat.