



KIMO RESOLUTION 1/04

Presented by KIMO Denmark

PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A EUROPEAN COASTGUARD

Background

The enduring environmental damage caused by the Prestige disaster on the coast of Galicia in November 2002 demonstrates that countries acting alone are under-resourced and ill-prepared to face such maritime disasters. It also highlights the problems with delayed action when an ecological disaster happens.

The Prestige sank about 200 km off the western coast between Spain and Portugal on 19 November 2002, with over 70,000 tonnes of oil on board. Some 25,000 tonnes of oil leaked from the stricken Prestige before she could be stabilised and up to 12,000 tonnes of fuel is still reportedly floating in the Bay of Biscay. The environmental damage will take years to repair and the decimated fishing and tourism industries are still struggling to recover.

The Spanish and Portuguese Governments delayed the response and cleanup efforts by disputing responsibility for the incident and forcing the tanker out to sea. A European Coastguard, if it had existed, could have taken control of the situation, insisted that the vessel had been taken to a port of refuge and called upon vessels or equipment from any country to ensure the clean-up operation was immediately undertaken. As a result, the response time could have been reduced thus affecting the magnitude of the ecological disaster.

In addition to the Prestige, the grounding of the Pallas and the incident involving the Baltic Carrier showed that many countries in Europe are not well prepared to co-operate when a disaster happens. In both cases, a lack of cooperation between neighbouring States reduced efforts to prevent the incidents and allowed the situation to escalate and result in increased environmental damage.

In recent years, the already congested coastal waters in Europe have experienced significant increases in maritime traffic. Additionally, the traffic from Primorsk in Russia through Danish

waters and into the North Sea is increasing dramatically; disembarkation is expected to be 300.000 tons of oil a day in 2005, increasing the statistical probability of a new environmental disaster occurring in European waters.

Therefore KIMO, in recognition of the clear need to be able to respond efficiently and immediately to maritime environmental disasters in Northern Seas, and in recognition of the clear need to improve EU maritime pollution legislation, and having regard to KIMO Resolutions 2/94, 4/94 (amended 96), 1/98, 7/01 and 1/03: urges national governments and the European Commission together with the European Parliament to:

- 1. Establish an integrated National Coast Guard in each country consisting of an independent agency with clear command and control structures and the power, expertise and equipment to act in the case of an emergency.**
- 2. In the short term, strengthen the remit of the European Maritime Safety Agency to allow it to intervene, if necessary, in any maritime incident where transfrontier pollution is likely to occur. Furthermore it should be given the power and means to requisition any vessel or equipment from any Member State that it deems necessary to resolve the situation.**
- 3. In the long term, establish a European Coastguard Service equipped with the necessary power and means, competence and instruments to ensure: maritime safety and the protection of the marine environment, the strict monitoring of adherence to certain shipping routes, the prosecution of illegal entry of vessels and the swiftest possible co-ordination of the necessary measures in the event of an accident at sea (including the assignment of emergency moorings and ports)**

KIMO members:

Agree to submit this Resolution to all National Governments, the European Commission and other relevant organisations.

*This Resolution was agreed unanimously by Delegates at the 14th KIMO International Annual General Meeting in Velsen, The Netherlands on October 9th, 2004 and became KIMO policy upon that date.