

# COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

COM(78) 154 final.

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Brussels, 5 April 1978.

## MEMORANDUM FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL

on the work of the European Communities on preventing and counteracting pollution caused by accidental discharges of hydrocarbons

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1. On 9 June 1977 the Commission submitted to the Council a communication and a draft Resolution on measures for the prevention, control and reduction of pollution caused by accidental discharges of hydrocarbons into the sea (COM(77) 265). In these the Commission proposed research on the environmental effects of accidental discharges of hydrocarbons and procedures for combatting such pollution, as well as the creation of an information system on the resources available for combatting it.

The idea was that the information to be stored in a system of this kind could be obtained by periodical enquiries made of the Member States and that, in the event of an accident, it would be readily available in the form required by the users.

On 14 June 1977 the Council agreed to examine the Commission's communication and draft Resolution as soon as possible. The Council's Working Party on the Environment devoted a single session to this examination but did not reach any workable conclusions.

2. The Commission continued studying the various aspects of preventing and countering oil spills at sea and, particularly, the resources available in the Member States for dealing with this type of pollution.

The Commission is also considering extending the scope of the study to include such aspects as the main oil tanker routes and the main technical features of tankers.

3. The serious accident to the tanker, Amoco Cadiz, and the harmful consequences to the marine environment and the economy of the affected

region illustrate the need for effective preventive action. The Commission therefore considers that the measures it proposed a year ago are still relevant and requests the Council to make every effort to ensure that the Resolution embodying the proposals is adopted.

This accident also confirms that a discussion of shipping conditions is urgently needed, as suggested in the Commission communication to the Council of 6 December 1977 on the rationalization of the shipbuilding industry in the Community (COM(77) 542 final).

4. In addition, and without prejudice to the current work of IMCO (Intergovernmental Marine Consultative Organization), it would be appropriate to refer to the Commission's announcement to the "Transport" Council of 27 October 1977, namely that the Commission would submit a proposal embodying the points on the subject of substandard ships agreed by the sub-committee on the North Sea. This would constitute the Community's first initiative in response to the French memorandum of June 1977 on a Community action on safety in shipping.