

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 201 (2005)¹ on major oil spills: the role of local authorities

The Congress, bearing in mind the proposal of the Chamber of Local Authorities,

1. Having regard to the report on “Major oil spills: the role of Local Authorities”, [CPL (12) 3, rapporteur: Anne-Grethe Ström-Erichsen (Norway, SOC)];
2. Bearing in mind that pollution of the world’s oceans, due to oil spills, has become a matter of increasing international concern over the past few decades;
3. Noting that much of Europe is surrounded by semi-enclosed seas, namely, the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea and the Baltic Sea, which have limited exchanges of water with the open ocean, making them highly sensitive to pollution;
4. Conscious that European coasts open to the Atlantic are also affected by pollution, mainly from land-based sources, offshore production of oil and gas, shipping operations and accidental oil spills;
5. Recalling with dismay the disastrous oil-tanker accidents that the European coastline has suffered in recent years, which have had a major impact on industry, leisure and marine and coastal biological life and huge economic long-term consequences;
6. Emphasising at the same time that the widespread practice of deliberate excessive discharges of oil and other hazardous substances from maritime shipping causes even more damage to the European littoral than oil-tanker accidents;
7. Recalling also that many of the chemicals shipped are far more dangerous to the marine environment and living organisms than crude or bunker oil;
8. Considering that, given the constant increase in the volume of maritime transport of dangerous and polluting substances, local and regional authorities in coastal areas are faced with permanent risks;

9. Noting that there is undoubtedly an increased awareness of environmental risks and that an improvement in legislation in these areas is needed;

10. Regretting that there is still inadequate implementation of existing legislation and insufficient compensation of victims and comprehensive contingency planning,

11. Calls on European local authorities to:

a. acknowledge the risk of transporting oil by sea and to prepare themselves to respond to potential oil spills as efficiently as possible;

b. develop an overall contingency plan and programme for dealing with oil spills, involving simulation exercises; investments in oil-fighting equipment, if necessary with neighbouring municipalities and regions; the training and establishment of local and regional emergency services and oil destruction centres; and the harnessing of volunteers and civil society for cleaning operations;

c. strengthen their co-operation with other territorial authorities, including national authorities and across borders, to exchange information and experience on ways of preventing and responding to oil spills; and consider establishing regional maritime safety centres;

d. develop joint oil-fighting capabilities with the private sector;

e. continue to exercise vigilance and exert pressure on national governments to accept their responsibilities in the prevention and reduction of oil spills and to apply effectively existing legislation, such as International Maritime Organization conventions and guidelines;

f. provide a platform for local authorities, who so wish, to meet in order to co-ordinate their preparation for and responses to maritime oil pollution;

g. take into consideration the Guide for local authorities, currently under preparation, on local authorities facing disasters and emergencies;

h. include representatives of local authorities having suffered from oil spills, in the proposed establishment of a network of mayors having faced natural and industrial disasters;

i. consider the organisation of future conferences on marine pollution in different regions of Europe; welcoming the proposal of the Turkish delegation to hold a conference on the subject of the Black Sea.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities on 31 May 2005 and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 2 June 2005 (see Document CPL (12) 3, draft resolution presented by A.G. Ström-Erichsen (Norway, L, SOC), rapporteur).