



Plenary sitting

B10-0163/2024

6.11.2024

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 136(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on EU actions against the Russian shadow fleets and ensuring a full
enforcement of sanctions against Russia
(2024/2885(RSP))

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B10-0163/2024

European Parliament resolution on EU actions against the Russian shadow fleets and ensuring a full enforcement of sanctions against Russia (2024/2885(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Russia,
 - having regard to the 14 consecutive packages of sanctions against Russia adopted by the EU since February 2022, and in particular to the EU’s 14th package of sanctions against Russia for its continued illegal war against Ukraine, strengthening enforcement and anti-circumvention measures, adopted on 24 June 2024,
 - having regard to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, and other relevant conventions of the International Maritime Organization (IMO),
 - having regard to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea,
 - having regard to the IMO assembly resolution of 6 December 2023 entitled ‘Urging member states and all relevant stakeholders to promote actions to prevent illegal operations in the maritime sector by the “dark fleet” or “shadow fleet”’,
 - having regard to Rule 136(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas on a daily basis, oil tankers with substandard maintenance, unclear ownership, a disguised origin or destination and a lack of protection and indemnity insurance, filled with Russian oil, sail through European waters as part of Russia’s effort to evade EU and G7 sanctions; whereas this ‘shadow fleet’ enables Russia to continue selling its oil for prices higher than the price cap imposed by the sanctions, and to continue funding its war against Ukraine, while increasingly threatening European maritime and coastal safety and the marine environment;
- B. whereas this Russian shadow fleet was purposefully developed by the Russian authorities in an effort to circumvent the G7 and EU-imposed price cap on its oil on a massive scale, by avoiding EU and G7 ports and services such as insurance;
- C. whereas within the past two years Russia has purchased over 600 run-down, outdated oil tankers to create its shadow fleet, which now mostly sails without insurance or proper staffing, and with obscure and alternating foreign ownership, travelling under the flags of other states with lax approaches to maritime safety; whereas, notably, this situation appears to have been aided and abetted by EU ship owners, with Greek ship owners selling Russia at least 125 crude oil tankers and carrier vessels, worth over USD 4 billion, to bolster its shadow fleet;
- D. whereas experts have described the shadow fleet’s oil tankers as ticking time bombs that

endanger maritime safety and could potentially lead to major and irreversible environmental disasters; whereas Europe has already come close to catastrophe several times as these tankers sail through the Baltic Sea from the Russian ports of Ust-Luga and Primorsk and transport crude oil to destinations beyond Europe, but also to Italy;

- E. whereas experience with past oil spills caused by tankers shows that damage to coastal and underwater ecosystems, as well as to surface-dwelling animals and sea birds, can last for decades;
- F. whereas according to the US Office of Response and Restoration, no solution completely removes an oil spill, and in the best-case scenario, only 40 % of oil from a spill can be cleaned up by mechanical means¹;
- G. whereas it can take hours or even days for one of the 14 European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) oil spill response vessels to reach certain areas, especially remote or more isolated coastal regions, which in turn puts the potential for effective oil spill containment at risk; whereas expanding EMSA's fleet with additional oil spill response vessels would align with the EU's commitment to environmental protection, resilience under the European Green Deal and the objectives of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism to enhance rapid response and disaster-preparedness capabilities;
- H. whereas due to the obscure ownership and lack of insurance of these shadow fleet oil tankers, Russia would not be held accountable for the clean-up following any oil spill or other disaster, and this would instead be at the financial cost of the physically affected coastal country; whereas clean-up and restoration is very expensive, and can run to the billions of euro;
- I. whereas, apart from clean-up and restoration costs, the areas affected by oil spills can incur a substantial loss of income, including from the loss of tourism and fishing activities; whereas taking legal action to obtain compensation for economic and environmental damage is often a long and burdensome process;
- J. whereas oil spills are already occurring around the world due to the poor maintenance and wear and tear of the ageing tankers; whereas Europe is at the highest risk of suffering such an oil spill in its waters due to its proximity to Russian ports;
- K. whereas on the open sea, the cargo of shadow fleet oil tankers is pumped onto other ships in hazardous ship-to-ship (STS) transfers in order to conceal the true origin of the oil; whereas the satellite-based Automatic Identification System (AIS) transponders are often switched off in order to evade monitoring and official inspections; whereas the IMO has labelled these practices high-risk activities that undermine the international regime with respect to maritime safety and environmental protection liability and necessary compensation;
- L. whereas according to the Kyiv School of Economics, the shadow fleet tankers carry up to 70 % of Russian oil product exports by sea, and even 90 % of crude oil exports;

¹ US Office of Response and Restoration, 'What Have We Learned About Using Dispersants During the Next Big Oil Spill?', 20 April 2015, <https://response.restoration.noaa.gov/about/media/what-have-we-learned-about-using-dispersants-during-next-big-oil-spill.html>.

whereas the total transported volumes have reportedly quadrupled since April 2022;

- M. whereas Russian state-owned company Sovcomflot has recently initiated another round of re-registration of its fleet under new shell companies, in an attempt to evade sanctions;
- N. whereas the Commission and the Member States have attempted to tackle the shadow fleet by means of sanctions and investigations, but these efforts have so far not been effective; whereas sanctioned oil tankers are still entering the Member States' territorial waters, and coast guard agencies are taking little preventive action in the face of Russia's shadow fleet passing through their waters;
1. Expresses serious concern about the risks posed by the Russian shadow fleet of oil tankers to the European and global environments and to maritime security; condemns Russia for deliberately creating immense risks for its own financial gain, with no regard for international safety or the risk of irreversible environmental damage;
 2. Stresses that the ongoing expansion of Russia's dilapidated, badly maintained and uninsured shadow fleet is causing global apprehension that goes beyond sanctions compliance, because Russia has created the conditions for a major and irreversible ecological disaster, likely to affect coastal EU Member States that will have to suffer the consequences of environmental damage and bear the cost of the clean-up;
 3. Calls on the Commission, together with EMSA, to increase resources to monitor, audit and investigate vessels departing from Russian ports, and proactively investigate any reported incident involving a suspected shadow fleet vessel; recommends, in this regard, that the Commission establish an EU task force on the Russian shadow fleet, to be led by the Commission in close cooperation with the European External Action Service (EEAS), EMSA and Europol; considers that this task force should be responsible for compiling and maintaining a registry of Russian shadow fleet vessels operating in Europe, for monitoring risks to the environment and maritime safety while preparing coordinated responses to any incidents, for organising enforcement actions with the Member States and relevant international bodies in order to uphold EU sanctions and maritime laws, and for publishing a biannual public report on fleet operations; urges the Commission and the Member States to coordinate such efforts with other coastal countries in Europe, particularly the United Kingdom and Norway;
 4. Calls on the Commission to provide emergency funding to secure additional oil spill response vessels for EMSA;
 5. Welcomes steps taken in the 14th EU sanctions package, including the direct sanctioning of shadow fleet oil tankers, and calls for its strict implementation by the Member States; urges the Commission to synchronise EU listings of sanctioned vessels with listings by the US and the UK without delay;
 6. Expresses its concern about the lack of impact of the latest measures, as investigative journalists have reported that on six occasions, one of these sanctioned tankers was still able to sail unhindered along the North Sea;
 7. Calls for the EU and the Member States to identify, on a continuous basis, shadow fleet

tankers and list their names and owners in the upcoming sanctions packages to disrupt Russia's ability to gain revenues from oil sales to fund its war of aggression against Ukraine;

8. Calls for the next EU sanctions package to be more comprehensive and sanction all known shadow fleet tankers and their owners, while also introducing sanctions on any oil tanker breaching the IMO's International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, and enforcing strict implementation by all the Member States of the measures prohibiting vessels, irrespective of flag, that have not followed the international rules regarding STS transfers at sea or have illegally turned off their AIS, from sailing in European waters or to any EU Member State port; urges the Commission and the Member States to ban STS transfers of Russian oil in EU waters;
9. Condemns the involvement of EU ship owners in the creation of Russia's shadow fleet and insists on an EU-wide ban on oil tanker sales to countries facilitating trade with Russia or not implementing the oil price cap policy;
10. Calls, more broadly, for the next EU sanctions package to include the automatic sanctioning of vessels sailing through EU waters without known insurance, in order to protect EU waters and avoid the financial burdens of oil spill clean-ups; urges the Member States, to this end, to step up their efforts to regularly audit suspect vessels for correct insurance and compliance in EU waters;
11. Urges the Commission to close sanctions loopholes concerning Russian oil refined into oil products by non-EU countries without delay;
12. Reiterates its call for a full EU ban on all Russian fossil fuels, with no exemptions;
13. Believes that, more broadly, the EU should have a plan for phasing out all fossil fuel imports and for phasing out the use of all fossil fuels, both to increase the competitiveness, resilience and sustainability of its energy system and economy and to follow through on the global goal of transitioning away from fossil fuels in the energy system, as agreed upon at the 2023 UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28);
14. Regrets, in this regard, that, while the EU achieved an 18 % reduction in gas demand between August 2022 and May 2024, the EU also commissioned a record number of 12 new liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals and six projects to expand existing terminals between 2022 and 2024, increasing the EU's LNG import capacity by 70 bcm to 284 bcm by the end of 2024²;
15. Calls for EU Sanctions Envoy David O'Sullivan, the EEAS and the Member States to urgently engage with non-EU countries purchasing Russian oil, including India, Türkiye, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, to highlight the significant risk posed by Russia's shadow fleet and the lack of accountability for Russia in the event of these oil tankers causing collisions, leaking oil, malfunctioning or even sinking in their waters;

² European Commission, 'State of the Energy Union Report 2024', 11 September 2024, https://energy.ec.europa.eu/publications/state-energy-union-report-2024_en.

16. Urges the Commission to prepare to impose penalties actions on states failing to uphold international standards concerning vessels operating as part of the Russian shadow fleet, and to propose a framework for Member State coordination under Article 97 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea for incidents involving these vessels;
17. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to actively engage with flag states to ensure that ships flying their flag adhere to measures which lawfully prohibit or regulate STS cargo transfers, including restrictions in sensitive marine ecosystems or protected marine areas, and that such ships strictly adhere to the safety and pollution prevention requirements set out in IMO conventions; urges flag states to delist sanctioned vessels from their ship registries;
18. Condemns, in the strongest possible terms, Russia's continued war of aggression against Ukraine and demands that Russia immediately terminate all military activities in Ukraine, unconditionally withdraw all forces and military equipment from the entire internationally recognised territory of Ukraine and compensate Ukraine for the damage caused to its people, land and infrastructure;
19. Expresses its undivided solidarity with the people of Ukraine, fully supports Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, and underlines that this war constitutes a serious violation of international law; stresses that the ultimate goal remains the achievement of a just and lasting peace in Ukraine on Ukraine's terms, ensuring the safety and dignity of the Ukrainian people within a peaceful and stable Europe;
20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the European External Action Service, the European Maritime Safety Agency, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the International Maritime Organization, and the President and Parliament of the Russian Federation.