

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0990/08

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to the Commission

Subject: Consequences of the Gibraltar authorities' failure to act in response to the New Flame accident

On 12 August 2007 the Danish-flagged 30 058-GT tanker vessel Torm Gertrud and the Panamanian-flagged 26 824-GT bulk carrier New Flame collided when the latter was leaving the port of Gibraltar (a UK colony).

As a result of the collision the New Flame ran aground near the Rock of Gibraltar, in the Bay of Algeciras.

As soon as the accident occurred, Spain - the country bordering the UK-administered colony of Gibraltar - urged the Gibraltar Port Authorities to take prompt, effective action.

Those authorities did not take any reasonable action, nor did they supply information to Spain's maritime administration.

The vessel remained stranded for a six-month period (despite the Spanish administration's repeated complaints) until a storm on 10 February 2008 caused the vessel - although still stranded - to suffer a fuel leak which polluted 1.5 kilometres of Spanish coastline.

1. What information did the Commission and the EMSA receive and what action did they take in order to prevent the pollution which ultimately occurred?
2. Following the adoption of two packages of maritime-safety regulations and in view of the advanced state of the third package, what action may the people of Spain expect from the Commission and the EMSA in response to the Gibraltar authorities' failure over a six-month period to solve a problem whose foreseeable consequences included the pollution of the Spanish coastline?
3. What action is the Commission intending to propose in order to prevent any recurrence of situations of this kind and, where necessary, to prompt an urgent and effective response which will minimise the consequences?