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Air pollution/Sulphur emissions

EP signs-off on new rules to limit sulphur emissions from ships, boosting health and environment

The European Parliament today adopted new revised EU legislation aimed at reducing sulphur pollution from ships (1). The final legislative agreement will introduce stricter limits on sulphur emissions from ships for Sulphur Emission Control Areas by 2015 and for all EU seas by 2020. Speaking after the vote, Green MEP **Satu Hassi**, who brokered the final legislative agreement as the EP's rapporteur/draftsperson, stated:

"The new rules adopted today represent a major concrete measure for reducing air pollution in Europe and improving public health. Thankfully, the final legislation remains ambitious and in line with the EU's international commitments in spite of intense industry lobbying. The legislation will deliver significant yet cost effective sulphur pollution reductions, with the cost of savings on healthcare far outweighing the costs of reducing sulphur emissions.

"Highly polluting shipping fuels have a serious impact on the environment but also on public health: air pollution from ships is estimated to cause 50,000 premature deaths per year in Europe. With air pollution from shipping expected to outstrip land-based emissions by 2020, urgent remedial action is needed. As such, this legislation is one of the most significant public health measures taken in this parliamentary term.

"The new general tougher limits on sulphur emissions from shipping will enter into force in 2015 in Sulphur Emissions Control Areas (SECAs) and 2020 in all EU seas. Not only will this have major health benefits, it will limit potential distortions of competition between firms facing even stricter limits in the SECAs and firms that do not operate in those areas (2).

"Importantly, the European Commission has also been tasked with reviewing its air quality legislation, with a view to extending the current stricter requirements on ships in port to all ships in territorial waters. This would be a cost-effective way of reducing pollution from shipping and extending the health benefits in EU coastal areas."

(1) The proposed EU legislation implements internationally-agreed (at the International Maritime Organisation - IMO) standards tightening limit values for sulphur emissions from ships, ensuring they can be properly enforced at EU level.

(2) The proposed maximum limits for sulphur content of marine fuels will be lowered in the designated

sulphur emission control areas (SECA) to 0.1% from 2015, affecting the Baltic Sea, the North Sea and the English Channel. In the rest of EU waters, the limits will be reduced to 0.5% from 2020. The provisions for delaying the limit value to 2025 based on IMO decisions were removed.

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