Press release | 07.10.2010

Offshore exploration

MEPs call for tougher rules on safety and liability of offshore drilling but regrettably drop call for moratorium

The European Parliament today adopted a resolution on offshore oil and gas exploration in Europe, highlighting the urgent need to strengthen EU rules on safety and liability. The Greens, who launched the EU debate on an offshore drilling in June, welcomed the vote and urged the European Commission to move quickly to address the major loopholes in EU rules but criticised centre-right MEPs for opposing calls for a moratorium on new deep sea drilling. After the vote, Belgian Green MEP **Bart Staes** (Groen) said:

"The possibility of a serious accident from offshore exploration in Europe is all too real and Europe is simply not equipped to deal with the devastating consequences. Offshore exploration has expanded exponentially, with deeper drilling resulting in magnified risks, but the Deepwater Horizon disaster has made tragically clear that rig safety has not kept pace. It is also clear that EU rules on liability and safety are not up to the task of responding to such a disaster. Against this background, a moratorium on drilling is the only responsible course of action and we regret that centre-right MEPs blocked an attempt by the EP to call for such a ban *."

Dutch Green MEP **Bas Eickhout** added:

"The Commission has acknowledged that EU rules on the safety and liability of offshore exploration are insufficient. Given the all-too-present dangers of drilling, the EU must act quickly to strengthen legislation concerning offshore exploration: we should not wait for a European disaster to act. The consequences of a spill would be devastating and would clearly extend beyond national borders, which is why EU regulation is necessary. In addition to updating the legislation on safety, there is also a clear need to strengthen rules concerning financial liability in the face of a disaster. We must learn the tragic lessons from the US and ensure the public is not left to pick up the bill for the incompetence of oil firms."

*The call for a moratorium was in the draft resolution voted today, having been adopted by the European Parliament environment committee, and was removed by a centre-right amendment.

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Bart Staes

Member

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