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Offshore oil drilling

Greens call for moratorium on offshore oil drilling in response to inadequate EU rules

The Greens/EFA group hosted a press conference in the EU Parliament highlighting urgent questions and concerns about the security of offshore oil drilling in the North Sea and European waters. Green MEP's **Michèle Rivasi** (France), **Bart Staes** (Belgium) and **Bas Eickhout** (Netherlands) raised the issue in relation to the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. At the press conference, the MEPs called for a moratorium on new offshore oil and gas exploration:

"The European Union is completely unprepared to deal with a potential spill from offshore drilling. Large aspects of offshore oil drilling remain unregulated, particularly concerning safety and liability, with the rules that are in place piecemeal and littered with loopholes. The current situation in the Gulf of Mexico has highlighted the devastating impact of a potential oil spill. The Greens are calling for a moratorium on new offshore oil and gas exploration, at the very least until there is more clarity on the legal and regulatory framework concerning this potentially extremely damaging activity.

Commenting on current EU rules governing environmental liability, Dutch Green MEP **Bas Eickhout** said:

"Current international and EU legislation on liability is fragmented and incoherent. It is absurd that international rules on liability for oil pollution caused by an oil rig do not exist. As a result, oil companies have few incentives to introduce additional safety measures for oil drilling. In addition, there is currently no EU legislation for damage to marine waters as a result of oil pollution or spills. As a first step, the EU should consider extending the Environmental Liability Directive to include damage to marine waters and delete the exclusion of liability for oil spill incidents that take place outside EU waters.

"The oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico shows that the use of fossil fuels is not only dirty, but can also be a costly and risky business. This proves once again that the EU should make energy savings and the transition to renewable energies one of its top priorities."

Commenting on safety, health and environment concerns, Green MEP **Michèle Rivasi** (France) said:

"It is now certain that the safety and impact assessments set up by BP and their contractors in the US

were not sufficient. We must ensure that EU companies can prevent and deal with such a catastrophe. Also, there is a need for 'inspecting the inspectors' since it seems that the regulation agencies are subject to corruption: the EU - through the European Maritime Safety Agency - should play such a role with regard to member states' certification organisations.

"There is a rising concern regarding the use of COREXIT dispersant by BP. Because these dispersants are patented, many ingredients are not known, so it is very hard to get information on the environmental and health effects. Other dispersants are proven to be less harmful but BP still continues to use one of the worst, which contains 3 hazardous substances. In any case, this dispersant does not properly address the polluting impact of the oil, which still remains."

With regard to the lack of regulation on the decommissioning of offshore infrastructure, Belgian Green MEP **Bart Staes** said:

"Hundreds of oil and gas wells are almost depleted and this substantial offshore infrastructure of platforms and pipes will have to be decommissioned over the coming years. This will have to be done in an environmentally safe way. The costs of this, which will run into tens of billions of euro, should clearly be borne by the industry, which has made huge profits, and not by the European tax payers. European companies like BP and Shell have been cutting costs by saving on safety measures. We will not let them get away with this by putting another ecological and financial burden on societies."

The Green members also urge Commission and Council to update the mandate of the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) located in Lisbon and to turn it into a real EU maritime watchdog with teeth. Currently EMSA has all the technical capacity and know how, but not the mandate to deal with spills from oilrigs (only from oil ships).

For visual information:

* For a Map of Deep water oil and gas operations in North Sea and Atlantic Frontier and the prevailing ocean currents:

<http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/northsea.png>

* Footage on the Deepwater Horizon disaster and North Sea oil platforms is available via filezilla (please download software), on <ftp://share.greenpeace.org> (username: video.input; password: v1d301n; folder: gpi_video_upload). If you have problems, please contact Greenpeace Video Desk for help +31207182183. Use of the material is free of charge, but any material used must be attributed to Greenpeace.

Press Service of the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament

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Bas Eickhout

Co-President



Michèle Rivasi

Member



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