OECD Urges Action to Address Shipwreck Pollution Disasters

The OECD has reiterated the determination of its 30 member countries to address the environmental and social costs caused by substandard shipping,tragically illustrated by the sinking of the single-hull tanker ‘Prestige’ off the coast of Spain.

OECD countries support efforts by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), which has primary responsibility for the legal, technical and regulatory aspects of international shipping, to strengthen the implementation of international rules and standards.

To complement the work of the IMO, the OECD’s Maritime Transport Committee has identified a range of ways in which OECD governments can help to tackle the dangers posed by substandard shipping and unscrupulous shipowners who reap big cash benefits from ignoring internationally accepted safety regulations.

With this objective in view, the OECD and its members will:

- work to strengthen the effective implementation of international rules and standards by both flag and port states to reduce the number of substandard ships plying the world’s seas,
- place pressure on classification societies to ensure that they meet appropriately high standards, including exploring the possibility of an international licensing system,
- explore the possibility of removing insurance cover for substandard shipowners intended to cover their own losses, in order to make it more difficult for their ships to operate, while promoting compulsory insurance for all ships for losses incurred by victims,
- develop incentives for responsible shipowners to encourage them to attain and maintain appropriate standards, and to better combat the unfair competition they face from substandard ships,
- enhance the availability and flow of information on substandard shipping in order to make substandard ships more easy to detect, and
- work to achieve transparency in the ownership and control of ships, in the interest of maritime security and to strengthen the likelihood of owners being held accountable for incidents involving their ships.

For further information and comment, journalists are invited to contact Danny Scorpecci in the OECD’s Directorate for Science, Technology and Industry on (33) 1 4524 9433 or e-mail: danny.scorpecci@oecd.org.