

Brussels,

C/2011/ 5363

28 JUL 2011

Dear President,

*The Commission welcomes the favourable opinion by the Italian Senate on its proposal for Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 1406/2002 establishing a European Maritime Safety Agency {COM(2010)611}. With regard to the comments raised by the Italian Senate, the Commission would like to provide the following information:*

*With regard to the remarks concerning the legal basis, the Commission is of the opinion that EMSA should continue to focus on safety of maritime transport, which includes also elements of prevention of and response to pollution caused by ships. The Commission proposal does indeed foresee additional tasks for EMSA, especially in the environmental field, but these remain ancillary to maritime transport safety and aim at avoiding duplication of efforts by building on the experience gained by the Agency.*

*Concerning the appropriateness of further bolstering the mandate and administrative structure of the EMSA, the Commission fully shares the views expressed by the Italian Senate and is of the opinion that its proposal contains these elements.*

*As regards the Senate's views on EMSA's role in ensuring a greater connection between the European Union countries and those of North Africa, the Commission notes that it has proposed the extension of EMSA's technical assistance to all EU Neighbourhood countries. In this context, the Commission would like to inform the Italian Senate that EMSA vessels have been made available to third countries in case of disaster through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.*

*On the emphasis put by the Senate as regards the centrality of the Mediterranean Sea in the European Union's maritime safety policies, it is also the Commission's wish that, through the action of the EMSA among other factors, it will be possible to foster coordinated action for marine environmental protection between all the countries of the Mediterranean, with particular reference to an immediate moratorium on drilling to prospect for and extract hydrocarbons, the management of fish resources, checks aimed at ensuring the cleanliness of the sea, and the conduct of naval vessels in transit, issues that all require swift, collegiate measures that are vital for obtaining tangible, positive results in terms of protecting the marine environment and its biodiversity.*

*Mr Renato Schifani  
President  
Senate of the Italian Republic  
Piazza Madama  
00186 Roma*

*The Commission believes that extending EMSA's mandate will contribute to the success of the Union for the Mediterranean and the Barcelona Convention. However, the Commission would like to recall that the mandate of the agency is limited to the safety of maritime transport. The fishing sector in particular is subject to other EU activities. As regards the extraction of the hydrocarbons, the proposal foresees that EMSA can intervene as regards response to marine oil pollution caused by oil installations.*

*Yours faithfully,*