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Brussels, 18 January 2006

**PROPOSED DIRECTIVE ON MARKET ACCESS TO PORT SERVICES II –
REJECTED BY THE EP PLENARY TODAY**

***Position reached in the European Parliament cannot lead to any result with
added value. Withdrawal recommended.***

ECSA – representing the shipping industry from the EU and Norway – has closely followed the debate in the European Parliament on the proposed Directive II on port services. ECSA has noted that the Plenary of the Parliament has rejected the Commission proposal. Consequently the Commission is invited to withdraw proposal II.

ECSA regrets that this important proposal has developed during the process into a position that withdrawal is to be recommended. Indeed as advised in its position paper in advance of the voting in plenary, the liberalisation elements that should be the basis of a Directive had substantially been weakened making an empty shell of the Directive.

ECSA would like to reiterate its appreciation for the efforts demonstrated by Rapporteur Georg Jarzembowski and other MEPs to arrive at a workable Directive responding to the needs of the trade.

At the same time ECSA would wish to reconfirm once again that liberalisation of port services is an essential step to further improve the position of maritime transport in the supply chain and in particular for the promotion of short sea shipping. Liberalisation through market access will increase efficiency and contribute to make the EU economy more competitive as agreed in the Lisbon declaration and reconfirmed by the EU Institutions. ECSA fails to understand why a follow up to the Lisbon declaration should not be given to port services, being a key element of the supply chain for European trade.

Withdrawal of the Commission proposal should not mean that the issue of increasing the efficiency of port services and the application of liberalisation in this important sector is closed.

On the contrary; the port sector is too important to leave things as they are. As for any other industry sector, the Commission should - as guardian of the Treaty - apply the basic principles of the Treaty on port services.

An appropriate port policy is essential for the EU as a main trading entity. Therefore, consideration should be given to a broad port policy including the necessary expansion of ports and efficient hinterland connections linking in with other transport modes.

European Community Shipowners' Associations

ECSA is looking forward to contribute to the debate leading to the establishment of this important policy.

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