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French owners urge IMO to follow lead on Erika 3

FRENCH shipowners have called on the International Maritime Organization to “convert the try” scored by the European Union in the field of flag state responsibility via the newly revised Erika 3 draft maritime safety package, *writes Andrew Spurrier.*

Owners’ organisation Armateurs de France (AdF) has welcomed the compromise draft package agreed by EU transport ministers.

It expressed particular satisfaction that the revised package did not seek to go beyond existing international provisions in the field of owner liability and said that it took a first step towards making flag states more responsible.

In this latter area, ministers dropped

plans to transfer responsibility for ratifying international conventions from member states to Brussels for a non-binding statement in favour of ratification. There are also to be published audits of flag state performance.

AdF urged the IMO to take up where the EU had left off, however, arguing that all efforts to improve maritime safety needed to be guided by the principle of “severity for the bad and avoidance of the penalisation of virtue”.

“At the international level, we are counting on a ‘conversion of the try’ at the IMO so that flag state responsibility — the missing link in maritime legislation — can become reality,” the owners’ organisation said.

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