



HNS Convention gains UK support

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Section: News

Release Date: Tuesday December 16 2003

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THE British government has said it will ratify an eight-year old international maritime convention on compensation for damage from noxious and hazardous cargoes, but will first consult publicly on how best to implement it.

The 1996 International Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea (HNS Convention) imposes increased liability on shipowners and requires them to insure against potential claims.

It increases shipowner liability from present levels of between £280,050 (\$488,800) and £28m under existing regulations, to between £8.5m and £85m, depending on the size of the ship.

Additional compensation will be available through the HNS fund if the cost of damage exceeds the shipowner's liability.

The UK government consultation will seek views on issues including the target date for ratification, the obligations to report receipts of HNS cargoes following transport by sea, and the option to exclude some types of domestic vessels.

"This consultation signals the UK's intention to ratify this important convention," said UK Shipping Minister David Jamieson.

"The UK has coordinated the international effort to encourage other countries to bring this convention into force and we would be one of the first countries to ratify [it]."

"We anticipate others will soon follow to ensure that the convention enters into force as soon as possible."

The convention would only enter into force 18 months after it has been ratified by at least 12 countries, including four with not less than 2m gt on their registers and providing that these contracting states have jointly received at least 40m tonnes of contributing cargo.

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