My name is Raúl García and I come from Galicia. I am 28 years old and the Prestige oil spill is the eighth environmental disaster I have witnessed in my country.


The Prestige was a 26 years old single-hull tanker, with a flag of convenience from the Bahamas, the oil it carried was owned by a Russian Company which has now disappeared, based in Switzerland and worked through a British Shipping Agent. The vessel was repaired in China a short time ago and so ... up to 15 countries have been finally involved in this case.

Four months after the oil spill we can be sure that the Prestige oil spill is one of the worst in History. The stunning facts are:

- 40,000 Tm of fuel spilled along more than 2,800 km of coastline, from Northern Portugal to France.
- 750 affected were beaches
- Fisheries were closed for 4 months in the most fishing-dependent areas in Europe.
- Thousands of families were directly affected
- 200,000 sea birds have died, as well as around 200 cetaceans, seals and marine turtles
- Just in Galicia, 18 proposed SCIs (Sites of Community Interest) and seven IBAs (Important Bird Areas) have been affected
- 1 billion Euro has been spent dealing with the spill in the first two months, another 1 billion will be spent over the next months.
- Long term economical damage is calculated at 3-6 billion €,
- 150,000 volunteers were involved in the clean up operations
- IOPC Fund will pay a maximum of 180-200 Million €
- 40,000 Tm remain 3,800 metres deep and every day more oil spills onto the coast.

Responsibilities lie at International Maritime Organisation (IMO), Community and National levels for the slow progress on the maritime transport security. After all
spectacular oil spills, the decision-makers talk about adopting all the necessary measures for improving maritime security. But when media interest declines everybody forgets the promises they made. And we have to wait for the next disaster. Most of the oil spills in the last years could have been avoided if some of the proposals on the table were approved.

**WWF demands for Ecosystem and resources recovery after the Prestige**

After such a large ecological catastrophe, with serious socio-economic repercussions, we are concerned about the criteria used by the Spanish Government for the recovery plan for the coasts and the economy in the area. Science and a long term view should be used, and not short term political and aesthetic criteria, as we observe in the current process. A real integrated ecosystem and resources recovery plan must be designed and not just cleaning up the face of the coast with aggressive systems aimed to forget the problem.

The 13 billion Euro “Plan Galicia”, proposed by the Spanish Government for the regeneration of Galicia is not the solution for the affected people and ecosystems. It does not deal with the lack of marine security in our waters. This plan represents a clear example of an unsustainable development model.

**Never again**

**WWF demands for improving maritime transport security**

- **Unlimited Liability Regime:** This is a key issue. The Prestige case will cost the EU citizens between 3 and 6 Billion €. The IOPC Fund will pay a maximum of 200 Million. For WWF, the EC and EP proposal for a supplementary compensation scheme for oil spills (COPE-fund) of up to 1 Billion € is not enough. The EU should follow a similar way to the USA related to the Unlimited Liability Regime through the IMO. A proposal to adopt key amendments to the international conventions on liability is long overdue.

- WWF welcomes the European Union's commitment in EC Communication COM (2002) 681 to review measures, through co-ordinated action by Members States, to improve the protection of EU coastal waters from ships that pose a threat to the marine environment. WWF welcomes the proposal of an Adequate protection of important European sea-fishing areas by making full use of and strengthening the Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSAs) scheme of the IMO. WWF has been advocating the identification of PSSAs in European waters for some time.

- **The development of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) proposal** requires three elements: an assessment of sensitivity of a given sea area; an assessment of vulnerability; and an outline of the measures to be introduced to reduce the risks posed by shipping. A survey of environmental consequences of recent shipping accidents should form a component of the review proposed in COM (2002) 681 and should be undertaken bearing in mind that it may form a
contribution to the development of a case (or cases) for PSSA proposals in European waters. A number of PSSA proposals are being considered at the current time. It is important that there is co-ordination, full risk assessment and that adjacent countries collaborate on the development of PSSA proposals.

- WWF welcomes the suggestion that a list of **fishing areas which warrant special protection be developed**. However, this initiative should not be limited to fishing areas. Under the Habitats and Birds Directive, all European states have to identify a series of marine protected areas to the EC. These areas will form a component of the Nature-2000 network in Europe. Many of these sites are particularly vulnerable and sensitive to the impacts of shipping activities. In addition to the areas identified as Nature-2000 sites, additional areas might be particularly sensitive and vulnerable to shipping activities. As a component of a risk assessment in European waters all these types of areas should be identified:
  - fishing areas
  - fish spawning and nursery grounds
  - marine protected areas
  - important and sensitive habitats such as coastal wetlands
  - important bird populations
  - important marine mammal (cetaceans and seals) areas.

In addition, as a component of the risk assessment, important social, cultural and economic areas which are sensitive to oil spills should be identified.

- **Corridors**: WWF believes that where necessary and where appropriate, international shipping should be re-routed to ensure that the ships can travel safely from one destination to another and to ensure that the environment (including wildlife, habitats and coastal communities) are not placed at unnecessary risk. A full risk assessment of European waters will inform where existing routes are acceptable and where they are inappropriate and need to be moved. E.g. Changes in Finisterre Corridor, where happened so many accidents in the last decade are necessary.

- **Inspections**: Thousands of vessels are inspected every year, but they are at documentary level and not with rigorous visual inspections. Information provided to WWF suggests that less than 50 per cent of the inspections are rigorous. It is essential to improve the inspections and to harmonize the rigor of the inspection of all vessels globally – both single and double hulls. If not vessels will transit EU waters and dock in EU harbours with lighter standards.

- **Classification Societies**: The responsibility of Classification Societies should be reviewed and the question of liability in the event of an incident addressed. When it is clearly identified that a poor inspection has contributed to an incident, some responsibility should fall to the company that certifies the state of the vessel.

- **Contingency Plans**: While effort should focus on prevention of accidents, inevitably they will happen, even with the best controls in
place. It is important that each member state has a national contingency plan to respond to oil and chemical spills (large or small) and that this plan is "tested" on a regular basis. It would also be appropriate for response to major incidents or potential incidents to be co-ordinated across Europe (as is beginning to happen). In the Prestige case, Spain has a national contingency Plan approved little time before the oil spill but without any implementation and few resources when it was necessary.

- **Single-hull tankers**: WWF is not able to answer the question on possible shortages as a result of phasing out and prohibition of single hull tankers in European waters. However we think is necessary that the timescale for a total prohibition of single hull tankers should be shortened, if not, statistics suggest that Europe will suffer another 6-7 big oil spills by 2015.

As a global organisation however, WWF is very aware that hull tankers could be the consequences of action at a European level with respect to single hull tankers could lead to grave consequences in other regions of the world. It is important to ensure that all shipping is safe and that all ships are seaworthy. So while WWF welcomes the proposals made by EU Ministers on single hull tankers, it is vitally important to ensure that measures taken within the EU framework are strongly promoted at a global level, with a view to ensuring that the consequences of European measures are not to simply move the problem to another region of the world.

**Other aspects regarding spills**

Major oil spills comprise just 10 per cent of whole hydrocarbons quantity arriving to the sea, 35 per cent of the total quantity are because of **deliberate spills in the Ocean**.

WWF has calculated that **every year 0.7-1.4 Millions Tm are spilled into the Mediterranean**. Thanks to its Operation ERGOS (Environmental Response Group on Oil Spills) WWF has detected in Canary Islands waters 150 deliberate spills in the last two years and only in one case the Law was involved in the case. Tele-detection and monitoring systems for reducing these spills and improving other at sea control measures should be established. The EU should take a leading role within the IMO framework to ensure illegal discharges are stopped!

**Flags of Convenience**: Finally, my last point is to do with Flags of Convenience. WWF believes that global action is necessary within the United Nation framework to review and address Flags of Convenience. This is not only a matter for the IMO, but involves other UN agencies as well. WWF believes that a new global agreement is required to ensure that flag states meet their responsibilities under UNCLOS.