

# New IMO ship inspection law ratified

*By Carlos Perez - Wednesday 27 February 2008*

SPANISH authorities will soon have the right to inspect vessels to ensure compliance with the International Maritime Organization convention on the Control of Harmful Anti-fouling Systems on Ships, which was ratified recently and comes into force in Spain on September 17, writes Carlos Perez.

Ships to which the convention applies must carry a certificate issued by their flag state confirming compliance with its provisions. This certificate will be issued following the successful completion of an inspection by the flag state.

Spanish authorities will have the right to check whether ships calling at Spanish ports are using harmful anti-fouling systems.

Such inspections must be made to both Spanish-flagged ships and any foreign vessels calling at a Spanish port, shipyard or offshore terminal.

Inspections will be limited to verifying whether the ship is carrying a certificate or declaration on anti-fouling systems following the model forms annexed to the convention.

The convention provides that thorough inspections will be carried out only if there are clear grounds to believe that the ship in question does not comply with the terms of the convention.

The measures that the authorities can take include the detention, dismissal or exclusion of the ship from their ports.

As a result of the convention, shipowners are increasingly using anti-fouling systems such as silicone-based foul release coating — which provides an environmentally friendly solution to combat marine fouling.

Among other cost and environmental benefits, silicone paint applied to the ship's bottom reduces water resistance and can save a substantial quantity of fuel per year.

Silicone painted ships can be cleaned in port while loading or discharging operations take place due to the silicone paint being a non-toxic coating, free of harmful substances.

It follows that ships will not lose any time during hull cleaning operations, thus reducing their stay in port.

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