

Ms Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium



Brussels, 18 December 2020

Subject: Damaged nuclear-powered ship is approaching our shores

Dear President von der Leyen,

The last nuclear-powered merchant ship still in operation, the Russian Sevmorput ship whose main engine is a 135-megawatt nuclear reactor, is currently damaged and dangerously approaching our shores. In its way to Antarctica to unload heavy packages for the extension of the Vostok science station, the Sevmorput was forced to turn back. After suffering of an unexplained propeller failure, the atomic ship shifts direction to returned to St Petersburg at reduced speed after having been spinning for several weeks off the coast of Angola and Congo Brazzaville. Angola and South Africa would have opposed an entry of the Sevmorput into their ports to carry out repairs in a shipyard.

In coming days, at the worst time of winter storms in the North Atlantic, the Sevmorput will be in the Exclusive Economic Zones of Portugal and Spain. The ship will then cross the Bay of Biscay, pass in front of Ushant, enter the Channel upbound rail and pass the Hague peninsula. It should cross the Pas-de-Calais Strait on 22 December. Its arrival is scheduled for 28 December 2020 in Saint Petersburg. Portugal, Spain, France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland, i.e. 14 European Union countries, are concerned by the passage of the damaged atomic ship.

We are alarmed that there are no coordinated arrangements between the countries of the European Union, neither international institution to deal with the possible drift of this floating nuclear power plant. No official protest has so far been made about this damaged nuclear-powered container ship whose sinking, fire, or collision with an iceberg would cause an unprecedented disaster and demonstrate the international community's short-sightedness.

We, as Members of the European Parliament, call the European Commission to coordinate with Russian authorities, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to manage that all technical and logistical help needed to prevent this nuclear-powered container ship from drifting are ensured.

A decision needs to be carefully considered and coordinated in order to assess whether a safe port of refuge should be quickly selected.

We call to put on the international agenda the end of nuclear ships in our seas.

Yours sincerely,

Michèle Rivasi

Jutta Paulus



Damien Carême

Mounir Satouri

Tilly Metz

Eleonora EVI

Magrete Auken

Kira Peter-Hansen