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Answer given by Mr Tzitzikostas
on behalf of the European Commission
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The Commission takes the risks posed by Russia's shadow fleet seriously and is addressing environmental and maritime safety threats they entail with targeted measures. EU sanctions designate shadow fleet vessels involved in risky or deceptive shipping, imposing port bans and service restrictions. So far, 444 vessels have been targeted, greatly reducing their activity. The EU has also engaged with third countries providing flags to these ships, raising concerns about environmental and maritime safety. Additionally, to further enhance maritime safety and environmental protection, Directive 2002/59/EC¹ has been amended to mandate insurance reporting for all vessels entering EU Mandatory Ship Reporting Systems, including those in transit.

The enforcement of sanctions rests with the Member States. Additionally, under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), coastal States have sovereignty over their territorial sea, including for the adoption of laws and regulations related to marine environmental protection, innocent passage as well as the need to take the necessary steps to prevent non-innocent passage. Member States that are coastal States under UNCLOS, have the obligation and responsibility to protect and preserve the marine environment in the maritime zones under their sovereignty, especially in ecologically sensitive and strategic areas like the Western Scheldt. The Netherlands, as the coastal State who has sovereignty over the Western Scheldt, has the responsibility under UNCLOS to adopt measures to protect the marine environment and ensure compliance with international law within its territorial sea.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2002/59/oj/eng>.