

Wadden Sea Board

WSB 28

13-14 March 2019
Berlin, Germany



Agenda Item:	5.5 Maritime Safety and pollution prevention of shipping
Subject:	Ref11362_DE_NL_WaddenSea_Containerspill_190111
Document No.:	WSB 28/5.5/1
Date:	17 January 19
Submitted by:	Germany/ Netherlands

Proposal: The WSB is requested to take note of the letter from the UNESCO WHC and decide on the way forward.



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Culture Sector World Heritage Centre

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Ref.: CLT/WHC/EUR/19/11362

11 January 2019

Subject: State of conservation of the Dutch and German components of the transnational World Heritage property "Wadden Sea"

Dear Ambassadors,

It was with great concern that I learnt of the spill of containers from the cargo vessel "MSC Zoe" near the island of Borkum.

In this respect, the World Heritage Centre has taken note of media articles (see example in the Annex) reporting about significant debris from the lost containers at the coastlines of islands belonging to the World Heritage property "Wadden Sea". We are sending you this information in accordance with Paragraph 174 of the *Operational Guidelines* in order to enable us to verify, with your authorities, the content of the information.

I would be grateful if the German and Dutch authorities could inform the World Heritage Centre about the exact location of the incident and any impacts on the state of conservation of the property, especially as some of the lost freight is reported to contain hazardous material. Furthermore, referring to the grounding of the vessel "Glory Amsterdam" one year ago (see the German authority's letter of 26 February 2018), I would be grateful for any updates by the German authorities regarding the outcomes of the investigation by the Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation and the water police.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to both of your authorities' swift emergency response with regards to surveying and cleaning of the coast.

Thanking you for your continuous collaboration and support in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

Mechtild Rössler
Director

cc. Permanent Delegation of the Kingdom of Denmark to UNESCO
Danish National Commission for UNESCO
German Commission for UNESCO
Netherlands National Commission for UNESCO
IUCN

**Example of media article reporting about the spill of containers of the
“MSC Zoe”**

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-netherlands-shipping-containers/chemicals-found-on-dutch-beach-after-north-sea-container-spill-idUKKCN1OX11O>; last accessed: 9 January 2019

Chemicals found on Dutch beach after North Sea container spill

January 3, 2019 / 6:56 PM

AMSTERDAM (Reuters) - A load of dangerous chemicals that fell off one of the world's largest container ships into the North Sea washed up on a Dutch beach on Thursday, and more debris was expected to land overnight, officials said.

The Dutch Defence Ministry said the loss of 270 containers from the freighter MSC Zoe on Wednesday, some of them thought to contain hazardous chemicals, was one of the biggest incidents of its kind, they said.

It was unclear how many of the containers sank to the sea bottom and how many were still floating and could pose a hazard to marine traffic or beach scavengers who turned out in response to reports of the cargo spill.

A 25-kg (55-pound) bag of organic peroxide, a strong bleaching agent that can cause injury on contact with skin, was swept ashore on Thursday, among dozens of containers from the ship to have appeared on or near the Dutch islands of Terschelling, Vlieland, Ameland and Schiermonnikoog.

“The expectation is that more things may wash up on beaches tonight,” Defence Ministry spokesman Sjaak Van Elten said.

At least three of the containers were thought to contain hazardous chemicals.

Dutch soldiers were summoned to help clean up the mess. Emergency services warned volunteers not to touch the containers, but scavengers and treasure-hunters also flocked to the jetsam, which included shoes, dolls and flat-screen TVs.

The peroxide was removed by emergency crews without incident, Friesland provincial authorities said.

But the Dutch Coast Guard said attempts to locate floating containers were being “hindered by multiple sport planes that have come to look ... We ask them to remain out of the area of this air space to prevent dangerous situations”. German authorities are leading the investigation into what caused the accident, which occurred in German waters near the island of Borkum.

An MSC statement said the containers were lost overboard during “heavy weather”, and a salvage company had been hired to assist in the cleanup and search for missing items.

MSC said it was taking the incident “very seriously, both in terms of the impact of such accidents on the natural environment and in terms of any damage to customers’ cargo”.

The MSC Zoe, one of the world’s largest container vessels, is owned by Geneva-based Mediterranean Shipping Company. The freighter is now at port in Bremerhaven, Germany.

Reporting by Toby Sterling; Editing by Mark Heinrich