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Sarkozy sparks outcry with policy omissions

Top French maritime bodies condemn Le Havre keynote speech on three major issues

Andrew Spurrier - mercredi 22 juillet 2009

FRANCE'S two leading maritime organisations have protested over the "incomprehensible" omission of merchant shipping from French president Nicolas Sarkozy's call last week for a new all-embracing strategy to restore France's maritime destiny.

The French Maritime Cluster and its institutional alter ego, the Institut Français de la Mer, expressed satisfaction with most of the speech made by Mr Sarkozy in Le Havre last Thursday but listed his failure to mention merchant shipping as one of three major omissions.

They said that his failure to spell out the role of merchant shipping in the elaboration of France's new maritime strategy was particularly incomprehensible given the French shipping industry's position among the world leaders in terms of quality and safety.

They called on the government to correct the omission when it came to draft the blue book announced by Mr Sarkozy, which is to serve as the basis for the country's new maritime strategy and which is due to be validated by an inter-ministerial committee before the end of the year.

The two organisations said that Mr Sarkozy's failure to mention aquaculture was as astonishing an omission, given its importance for the future, and that they considered that his failure to refer to France's role as a champion of maritime safety had also been surprising.

The French president did refer to France's role in securing the passage of the Erika III package during its presidency of the European Union last year, but the two organisations indicated that they thought that he should have gone further.

France had played a major role in this field, they said, adding that its past successes were the best guarantee of future progress.

The most important thing though, they said, was to ensure that all Mr Sarkozy's announcements were given concrete effect and that work on their implementation began straight after the summer holidays.
