

Gibraltar fray blocks IMO conventions

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CONFLICTING territorial claims over Gibraltar are holding up ratification of two international maritime conventions by the European Union, according to the European Commission, writes Justin Stares in Brussels.

The long-standing bilateral problem prevents all EU member states from ratifying the 2002 International Maritime Organization protocol to the Athens Conventions on transport of passengers and goods by sea, as well as the United Nations protocol on civil liability for damages caused by industrial accidents on transboundary waters, which dates back to 2003.

Other conventions on subjects as diverse as mobile equipment and children's rights are also not applicable in Gibraltar due to the continuing dispute, said Brussels home affairs commissioner Franco Frattini.

"The differences between Spain and the United Kingdom over Gibraltar are of considerable concern to the commission because it is currently blocking the adoption of several important international conventions in the areas of civil justice, transport and environment," said Mr Frattini.

The commission has reportedly written to both countries several times since 2005 urging them to unblock the situation.

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