

**ACCELERATING PAN-EUROPEAN CO-OPERATION
TOWARDS A FREE AND STRONG
INLAND WATERWAY TRANSPORT**

DECLARATION

Adopted by the Rotterdam Conference

I. PREAMBLE

Representatives of governments of European countries and of international organisations and observers from other countries having an interest in inland waterway transport, meeting at the Pan-European Conference on Inland Waterway Transport in Rotterdam on 5 and 6 September 2001,

A.

Recognising the impetus the Ministerial Conference on Timely Issues of European Inland Waterway Transportation (Budapest, September 1991) has given to discussions and actions aimed at the promotion of inland waterway transport and the removal of obstacles to the development of this mode of transport,

B.

Recognising the increasing attention given to inland waterway transport in recent years by the European Union, for instance through

- the establishment of the TEN framework;
- the completion of the internal transport market, harmonisation of technical prescriptions and conditions for obtaining boatmasters' certificates;
- the liberalisation of inland waterway transport; and
- measures taken to overcome and prevent overcapacity, carried out in co-operation with the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR),

C.

Recalling the permanent activities of the CCNR and the Danube Commission to improve the safety, effectiveness, efficiency and environmental sustainability of inland waterway transport and to contribute to a larger share of this transport mode in the total flow of transported goods,

D.

Taking into account the legal and technical work carried out in the framework of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE) to harmonise the technical, professional, safety and infrastructure-related regulations for inland waterway transport at a Pan-European level,

E.

Taking also into account the Resolutions and Round Tables of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) on in-depth analyses of the scope for and obstacles to the expansion of inland waterway transport,

F.

Recalling the Declaration of the Third Pan-European Transport Conference (Helsinki, June 1997) and the Declaration of the UN/ECE Regional Conference on Transport and the Environment (Vienna, November 1997), and in particular their focus on sustainable transport,

G.

Taking into account the conclusions of the Gothenburg European Council (June 2001) on a strategy for sustainable development, in particular with regard to the improvement of the transport system,

H.

Taking note of the European Commission's Policy Guidelines of the White Paper on a Common Transport Policy (July 2001),

I.

Recognising the important safety and environmental advantages of inland waterway transport and convinced of a common interest in fostering its growth and its integration into the multi-modal transport system, so that it can contribute to the reduction of congestion - especially in road transport - and ultimately make the transport sector compatible with sustainable development,

J.

Noting that, although progress has been made, there are still obstacles to the development of inland waterway transport which are related to inadequate infrastructure, legal procedures and lack of harmonisation of fiscal, social and economic conditions for fair competition as well as of technical regulations, professional requirements and administrative procedures,

K.

Noting further that, partly because of these obstacles, inland waterway markets at Pan-European level are today still fragmented and partly closed to third country operators,

L.

Convinced that the removal of those obstacles and the opening of the markets are essential factors to achieve a free, competitive and sustainable inland waterway transport system, on condition that the existing high level of safety and quality standards is maintained or improved, and favourable social conditions, at least the existing ones, are safeguarded,

M.

Convinced also that the EU enlargement process can contribute substantially to the further opening of the markets and the removal of the above-mentioned obstacles,

N.

Recognising that many of the above-mentioned opportunities and obstacles concern sea-river transport and ports as well,

Hereby endorse the following objectives and actions to accelerate through concerted action the development of inland waterway transport towards a safer, cleaner and more competitive Pan-European transport mode:

II. MAIN OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

The central objectives are:

- to foster the growth of inland waterway transport and increase its share in the transport of goods;
- to further improve the sustainability, safety and efficiency of inland waterway transport;
- to create a transparent and integrated Pan-European inland waterway transport market based on the principles of reciprocity, freedom of navigation, fair competition and equal treatment of the users of inland waterways.

To achieve these objectives, Pan-European co-operation between governments and international organisations must be intensified with a view to carrying out the following actions:

INFRASTRUCTURE

1.

To develop a modern, environmentally respectful and efficient waterway infrastructure network as a prerequisite for the promotion of inland waterway transport, as well as for the improvement of sea-river transport,

2.

To consider, whenever decisions on infrastructure are taken, whether better utilisation of the existing inland waterway infrastructure or the construction or improvement of waterway infrastructure might be an alternative to the construction or improvement of infrastructure for other modes of transport,

3.

To improve the navigational conditions and infrastructure on the TEN waterway network, and on other main Pan-European waterways (the so-called E-waterways) and to remove bottlenecks, taking into account the development of the inland navigation fleet as well as the economical and ecological aspects,

4.

To include as a standard element in the development of existing, as well as the planning of new, logistical centres and industrial areas for the manufacture, transshipment and storage of goods, the possibility of connecting them to the inland waterway network,

5.

To further develop combined transport terminals in order to enlarge the scope of inland waterway transport and to better integrate it into the combined transport chain,

6.

To develop alternative financing schemes, including co-financing, public-private partnership etc., to finance the improvement of the inland waterway transport infrastructure, involving to the largest possible extent the beneficiaries of such improvement,

7.

To encourage governments of European states having an interest in inland navigation, if they have not yet done so, to become Parties to the European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN), as well as to the Protocol on Combined Transport on Inland Waterways to the European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC), and implement them as soon as possible,

8.

To promote the improvement of the navigational conditions along the Danube, relating mainly to the existing draught limitations of this crucial waterway, which has been identified as Pan-European transport corridor VII,

9.

To support the efforts of the governments concerned to develop the connections between the Danube, the Oder and the Elbe,

10.

To invite governments concerned to establish a Pan-European River Information Service (RIS) by the year 2005, based on standards to be drawn up in the framework of the European Union, UN/ECE and the two River Commissions, since river information services contribute to safer and more efficient inland waterway transport,

11.

To consider whether the contribution by inland shipping to the infrastructural and external costs can be limited in case all transport modes are to contribute to covering these costs,

LEGISLATIVE HARMONISATION AND ACCESS TO THE MARKET

12.

To invite the European Commission, the UN/ECE and the two River Commissions to intensify their co-operation on Pan-European harmonisation of technical, safety and manning requirements, and to encourage them to co-operate on the improvement of professional education and training,

13.

To invite the UN/ECE, the European Commission, the two River Commissions and the ECMT to identify in close co-operation before the end of 2002 the legislative obstacles that hamper the establishment of a harmonised and competitive Pan-European inland waterway transport market, and to formulate solutions to overcome them,

14.

To facilitate the exchange of qualified personnel between European countries, as a means, for example, to overcome the imbalances in the employment markets, provided that adequate professional and social standards are maintained,

15.

To encourage governments of European states having an interest in inland waterway transport to consider ratifying or acceding to, if they have not yet done so, the Budapest Convention on the Contract for the Carriage of Goods by Inland Waterways (CMNI), the Strasbourg Convention on the Limitation of Liability of Owners of Inland Navigation Vessels (CLNI), and the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterways (ADN),

SAFETY AND SUSTAINABILITY

16.

To encourage governments and international organisations concerned to maintain and develop further the safety standards, especially in the field of carriage of dangerous goods, as well as the measures in order to prevent water pollution, and reduce air pollution and noise emissions,

17.

To encourage governments of European states having an interest in inland waterway transport to ratify or accede to the 1996 Convention on Collection, Discharge and Reception of Waste arising from Rhine and Inland Navigation,

18.

To request the international organisations involved to complete and harmonise standards for the reduction of emissions from vessel engines,

PROMOTION

19.

To take measures to raise the awareness of the public and the transport industry of the advantages of inland waterway transport as a safe and environmentally respectful mode of transport,

20.

To promote co-operation between inland waterway transport companies on the one hand and short-sea, rail and road transport companies on the other, as a means of improving intermodal transport,

21.

To invite the inland waterway transport industry to consider creating the necessary organisational frameworks, including at Pan-European level, to improve the representation of its interests in international fora,

III. MONITORING AND REVIEW PROCEDURES

22.

To invite the European Commission, the UN/ECE, the CCNR, the Danube Commission and the ECMT actively to promote and monitor the implementation of the various actions of this Declaration,

23.

To convene a new Pan-European inland waterway conference in Romania to be held within 5 years from now.

On behalf of all participants,
on 6 September 2001,
Rotterdam, the Netherlands

The co-chairpersons of the Ministerial Conference,

Ms. T. Netelenbos
Minister of Transport, Public Works and
Water Management,
The Netherlands

Mr. M.T. Mitrea
Minister of Public Works,
Transport and Housing,
Romania