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Notes for the speech of Mrs. Karla Peijs, European Coordinator for Inland Waterways.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am Karla Peijs, coordinator of inland waterways on behalf of the European commission and I am very happy to be here with you today because you are discussing in this conference exactly my most important subject.

HOW CAN WE MAKE EUROPEAN RIVERS NAVIGABLE WHERE THEY ARE NOT, PRESERVING IN THE SAME TIME THE ENVIRONMENT.

I don't need to tell you why governments, the EU and business people are looking at rivers and in this specific case to the Danube with eyes full of hope and head full of dreams of a long-long river filled with cruise ships, barges and so on.

NGOs think differently and have nightmares seeing the same images. They see the same ships polluting the same long-long river and they see waterworks spoiling the free floating river and they hate it.

Climate change brought to us the emission problem. Fast developing countries like the Danube riparian states are concerned about the infrastructure. Specially rail and road are extremely costly to roll out over the country.

Therefore we rediscovered inland navigation that's why Governments and business have the same idea of the Danube.

River like the Danube can solve a lot of transport problems. Of course there are limits on the possibilities and these limits are set by safety, security and environment.

In the Netherlands we are using our rivers for transport as long as we can remember. We had to use them because we lived between and with rivers crossing our country.

Also as transport expert, I do believe in waterborne transport because it can take away the need to build a comprehensive network of roads and rails.

Why now should we take on board this challenge?

In the first place, because Europe and the Member States have now in place the European and National legislations.

I believe that it is important that all the involved stakeholders, from the National and Local Governments, to the environmental associations, the transporters, the ports operators and the researchers are convinced that it is important that we all keep to this legislation. So together we are going into the process of promoting a sustainable river transport system.

During last few years, the European Community has given itself very effective tools to promote the development of inland navigation.

First of all, I refer to the Naiades Action Programme. This encompasses actions for the development of the inland navigation from the market, the fleet, the infrastructures, training, promotion and image development for the creation of a solid and sustainable transport mode. And here comes also the other aspects of tools and in particular legislative tools that the institution have adopted in order to support a sustainable system: I am referring to other Directives like

the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and LIFE, including NATURA 2000, that set fundamental rules for the respect and the protection of our environment.

In second place it is very important to mention the financial support that the European Commission is able to give to inland navigation projects. Really the Commission put the money where their mouth is. So they use to their best extent the tools that the European Union provides in terms of funding infrastructures and innovation. As technology progresses continuously, we have the opportunity and the obligation to use it for a modern fleet of boats and engines, for the organisation and construction of intermodal ports that link different modes of transport in an efficient manner, while ensuring the greatest respect to the preservation of unique habitat like the rivers are.

I interpret my task as Coordinator in this sense: my first target is to create the conditions for the development of inland navigation supporting the implementation of the principles included into the Naiades Action Programme: developing the market, encouraging the creation of intermodal points where the implementation of comodality will be best exploited.

While taking advantage from efficient technologies in terms of vessel design, use of bio fuels and implementing tools like, for instance, the River Information Services (RIS) that will provide safety and security.

I will also be engaged in promoting a modern image of inland navigation, including education and training and certainly encouraging the implementation of infrastructures that are conceived for the safety and the reliability of the navigation, but in full respect of environmental Directives to minimise the impact on the habitat.

The clear and sound Directives are most important to create confidence between Groups for the protection of the environment and Groups of entrepreneurs, to promote together a sustainable transport system. If we really want to develop a sound, efficient, cost effective and sustainable navigation transport system we have to build a

consensus, confidence in each other and most of all cross border solidarity and cooperation.

Most of all we need a common approach: transport on the river yes but under firm conditions.

We should not consider a river only as a corridor from one point to another, yes of course it is, but it is much more because if we equip it with efficient inland ports, the river becomes the entry point to a wide river basin through the use of other canals and side rivers but also and most importantly through the interchange with other modes of transport at intermodal points.

All these assets will really provide a winning situation if only the inland navigation that we want to develop is sustainable in all its aspects: environmental, social and economical. If any of these aspects is not sound, then inland waterways will not provide a choice to entrepreneurs and will not provide a valid support to counter the overwhelming challenge of climate change.

My conclusions for today are that we have to find integrated solutions based on mutual trust and built on consensus for the global development of regions and of the intermodal transport opportunities funded on environmentally sound measures.

We want the rivers clean, sound and alive. We need all the services along the river that can help if problems occur. We want to build confidence between Nations and specific groups along the river. I will try to be oil in the machinery but we also need OSCE and all the relations OSCE already built.

We can make use of all the tools the European Commission made available. I really like to put all my energies into the process. There will be no better time to try to succeed in developing inland waterways than today.