

**Speech by Tineke Huizinga, State Secretary for Transport, Public Works and Water Management, at the Main-Port Development Conference on HNLMS Johan de Witt, Constanta, Thursday 9 April, 09.10.**

Mr President, Excellencies, distinguished guest,

It is a great pleasure for me to speak on this important conference. I am also very honoured to speak to you in the presence of President Basescu. Trained in the field of maritime affairs with an enormous experience as Transport minister, you are a true expert on the subject of our conference today.

I would also like to thank Mr Balan for making this event possible at this special location here today.

This logistical hub is the perfect place to discuss the importance of seaports, efficient transport and the power of transport networks. Constanta is in an excellent position: the most important port of the Black Sea with a direct link between Europe and Asia.

I understood the plans for this port are ambitious. I am keen to know more about your vision, strategy and plans during this conference.

In the Netherlands too, we are constantly looking for ways to improve the position of our ports. As a government we take a broad perspective: it's not just about the port. It's also about spatial planning, level playing field and connections to hinterland.

Recently, the Rotterdam port authority started works on a major port expansion project. By creating an additional 1000 hectares of new industrial zone - by reclaiming land from the sea – we can expand and improve our competitive position. That is all the more important in times of economic crisis. So Rotterdam, which handles more than 400 million tonnes of goods and 10 million containers a year, can continue to play its crucial role for the European economy.

If Rotterdam is to remain the Gateway to Europe, the Netherlands must have good connections with Germany and the rest of Europe: fast, safe and sustainable

transport, and efficient logistics. Not only roads, but also short-sea networks, rail connections, intermodal terminals and inland waterways. Thanks to its location in a delta along the North Sea and its natural waterways to the heart of Europe, the Netherlands created a strong, flexible logistical system. And it has made a considerable contribution to economic growth in Western Europe.

You have the prospect of reaching a similar position. You have the opportunity to give business the space it needs. With good intermodal hinterland connections, inland ports and terminals you can make lasting improvements to your transport network. You are a maritime country with a growing internal market and the river Danube with all its potential at your disposal. You are in an excellent position to benefit from a robust system of inland navigation.

To reach this goal it is our experience that all elements of the 'logistical puzzle' need to be developed properly. Let me mention the quality of logistical services, transshipment capacity and ports, as well as the educational levels of maritime personnel. But we should not forget customs and security. They are all needed to create a seamless logistical flow. So it is quite a challenge to set up a fully operational European corridor, which to my opinion should stretch from Constanta to Rotterdam and vice versa.

The fact that Romania has joined the EU greatly increases opportunities for cooperation. And although the Netherlands and Romania already work together on various fronts, there are still EU instruments with more potential. We see this as a challenge and opportunity for both countries to cooperate. And for this reason a number of Dutch companies have joined forces in the European Gateway Platform. They offer you their expertise and experience.

The Dutch government firmly supports this initiative. Cooperation between the Dutch and Romanian business communities is vitally important. Dutch companies have considerable know-how and together with you, they want to join hands to create win-win situations. Because we all know that good infrastructure and a smooth running logistical system, is a foundation for prosperity.

Ladies and Gentlemen, since we are in these impressive maritime surroundings, let me take the opportunity to tell you something about the Dutch maritime sector. This is a highly successful part of our economy, which offers enormous added value, employs many people and generates a lot of export revenue.

The Netherlands have many years of experience in port development. All over the world, Dutch consultants are involved in projects in this field. And our port authorities work with many counterparts abroad.

There is great potential for cooperation in the field of maritime services and shipbuilding. The Netherlands is one of the top three shipbuilding countries in the EU. You can get an impression of Dutch maritime services and shipbuilding at the trade fair that Ahoy Rotterdam organized here in the port of Constanta.

The Netherlands also has considerable know-how in managing waterways. How do you ensure that ships move through the system safely and efficiently? How do we keep track of dangerous goods, and what should you do if disaster does strike? The Netherlands has given a great deal of thought to questions like these.

Finally, we can provide consultancy on infrastructure. Here too, the Netherlands is keen to offer its assistance. Sound advice can be worth its weight in gold in finding the right approach.

Ladies and gentlemen.

Your country has enormous logistical potential. Using Dutch expertise you can speed up this process. Fortunately, many contacts have already been established between Romania and the Netherlands. We don't start from scratch. I am glad to see that during this conference, we will take an integrated approach to all of these issues. I expect this to lead to many new ideas.

To conclude.

We all agree inland navigation can play a more prominent role in Romania's transport system. I am very interested to see how your plans turn out in the years to come. You have a third of the River Danube within your borders. That puts you at a great advantage. Dutch companies, working together in the European Gateway Platform, are eager to work with you.

I see great potential in our logistical corridor Constanta – Rotterdam. Let this day inspire us to join hands in realizing this goal.

I wish you a fruitful conference.

Thank you.