

HIGH-LEVEL MEETING
ON DRAFT COMMUNICATION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON
THE PROMOTION OF INLAND WATERWAY TRANSPORT (NAIADES)
(Vienna, 15 February 2006)

**Statement by Mr. José Capel Ferrer, Director, UNECE
Transport Division**

Dear Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to congratulate the Austrian Presidency of the EU and the European Commission on the excellent organization of this High-Level Meeting and to thank them for inviting me to attend this important event.

The UNECE welcomes the NAIADES Action Program.

Inland navigation is a disadvantaged mode of transport, both at national and notably at pan-European level. Inland shipping has not benefited from the increase in transport demand occurred in the past three or four decades in Europe. Nor has it benefited from the more recent and ongoing East-West transport increase. And if nothing is done, it may not benefit from the further increases expected in future.

Here again we encounter the old dilemma of the chicken and the egg. There is no or little demand for inland shipping because the supply is not good enough. And there are no or little improvements in the supply because there is no or little demand to justify them. We must break this vicious circle. However, where to start?

Inland shipping must certainly adapt itself to the transport needs of modern economies, so that it can be integrated into the inter-modal transport chain, including in the sea-river chain.

However, Governments have a key role to play in breaking the vicious circle. What is needed is political will and resources to develop a coherent, efficient pan-European waterway network and a harmonized regulatory framework that allows market forces and competition to develop efficient transport services. Efforts should start where they can be the most cost-effective: organizational measures, technical harmonization measures, equipment of inland water ports, etc.

We believe that the EC can and should play a major role in promoting and catalyzing this political will of Governments both of EU and of third countries.

The United Nations in Geneva can and should also play a role in improving inland navigation at pan-European level. The UNECE has a specialized Working Party on Inland Water Transport (SC.3), in which all European Governments participate. The SC.3 has elaborated the **AGN Agreement**, which set up the E waterway network and the uniform requirements for its development. The AGN is the basis for the development of a coherent pan-European network of inland waterways and also of “motorways of the sea” in Europe. Both Rhine and Danube riparian countries are Parties to the AGN.

The EU could consider becoming a Party to the AGN. The EU is already a Party to several UNECE Agreements and Conventions. Accession to the AGN would give the EC a key role in the development of the E waterway network.

We can also offer the **Blue Book**, which reflects the actual state of the E waterway network and a list of missing sections and main bottlenecks in this network.

The UNECE has also, in cooperation with both River Commissions, developed the **ADN Agreement**, for the safe carriage of dangerous goods by inland shipping.

Another area where the UNECE can contribute usefully is the development of technical and safety standards in inland navigation. The objective would be the achievement of a Europe wide reciprocal recognition of ships' and crews' certificates and licenses issued by Governments on the basis of the agreed single set of minimum technical and manning requirements. This would ensure a high level of safety and facilitate international inland water transport on the continent.

We in the UNECE believe that promoting inland water transport at pan-European level would contribute effectively to sustainable development and to economic growth and prosperity of Europeans. The UNECE is ready to cooperate with the EC, the River Commissions and other partners in this endeavor.

I wish the greatest success to this High Level Meeting and thank you for your attention.
