

Speech – Director of Maritime Affairs, Michiel van Kruiningen

Celebration of 10 years CESNI – World Museum Rotterdam

Good afternoon,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to the celebration of 10 years of CESNI here in Rotterdam, the gateway to Europe.

Many of you will know Rotterdam first and foremost because of its port. Every day, large containerships and tankers enter this harbour, and millions of tons of goods pass through its intricate hinterland network. It is this very network that keeps the port running and ensures its strong position in the global market.

Inland waterway transport plays a vital role in that success, as these inland waterway vessels visit the port almost 100.000 times a year and bringing over 50% of the goods from the Rotterdam port to the rest of Europe. This signifies the importance of IWT as a transport modality in our European market, and it is why it is an honour for me to welcome you to this symposium celebrating 10 years of CESNI.

The Netherlands has always had a special connection to waterborne transport – whether on the high seas or along our rivers. Zooming into one of these rivers which stems from the mountains of Switzerland and leads to the lowest point of our country. The Rhine has long been Europe's gateway which provides millions of people with fresh water, energy, recreation, and – of course – the transport of goods. But Europe is more than just the Rhine: it is also the Danube, the Sava, the Douro, the Po, the Meuse, the Oder, and many more rivers that connect our continent.

European inland navigation has proven itself as a reliable, flexible, and sustainable mode of transport. This success is due to the passion of entrepreneurs, the innovations in shipbuilding, and the effectiveness of joint regulation. In term in office as President of the CCNR, I have come to appreciate the important role of CESNI. The level of international cooperation within CESNI, between the sector, member states and stakeholders, is impressive and should serve as an example for other sectors.

Through standardisation of the IWT sector of Europe, CESNI has ensured that the sector remains a vital stakeholder in Europe's transport infrastructure. The work of CESNI has led to advancements in technical requirements, crew operation and information technologies. All meant to advance safety, working conditions and digitalization. It's many participants, from member states to sector representatives, have a unique pragmatism in their work ethic. It ensures that the IWT sector can keep counting on CESNI to provide, keep up and innovate in the regulatory field.

At the same time, our sector faces multiple challenges. It is our shared responsibility to safeguard its reliability, its attractiveness as workplace, and its ability to innovate while ensuring safety.

And forgive me for having a critical eye to the future. Global developments in climate, economy, and security all affect inland navigation. This makes our task clear: the urgency to work together towards adaptive, effective, and innovative regulations is

growing. Only with your ongoing commitment can we secure the success and resilience of our sector for the years ahead.

Before concluding, I would also like to reflect on the end of the Dutch presidency of the CCNR (*Rijnvaartcommissie*), which is nearing fast. The Netherlands are looking back at two years of hard work and cooperation with the member states and sector, in which advancements were made in the field of smart shipping and digitalization, climate adaptation, greening of the fleet; and where the member states worked on further enhancing the cooperation and innovation between CESNI and the CCNR. The Netherlands can confidently pass on the presidency to Switzerland, who will hopefully continue the path of innovation and stability.

Dear participants, let me conclude by wishing you a fruitful symposium – one where we can learn from each other and reflect on ten years of CESNI with pride and confidence. Where we look ahead with a sense of urgency and necessity for continuing development of the IWT sector as key player in our European transport network.

On behalf of the Dutch delegation, I thank you for coming to Rotterdam and for allowing us the honour of hosting this milestone and celebration.