

Siim Kallas

Vice-President of the Commission, responsible for Transport

Future perspectives of the European Maritime Transport Policy

*Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

International Shipping Conference

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Ladies and gentlemen, Minister Mikkelsen,

First of all I would like to thank you, Minister Mikkelsen for the excellent cooperation in preparing this conference. Copenhagen is a genuine maritime city and an ideal place to host a global exchange on maritime transport issues. I am very pleased about the distinguished participation from around the world, to discuss today's and tomorrow's challenges and opportunities for shipping in a truly global manner. To our guests, especially those coming from afar, I would like to extend a warm welcome on behalf of the European Commission. Transport has been and will remain an essential component of our daily lives and not just on a national or regional basis. It has contributed substantially to the development and integration of regions around the world, with tangible benefits to their economies. The European approach to transport policy has always been to **focus on quality** and to **raise standards** for the sector such as improved working conditions, higher safety and security conditions as well as the strengthening of passenger rights. Europe is growing together thanks to an ever increasing transport network involving all modes of transport. Transport is key to the European economy — accounting for about 7% of GDP and over 5% of total employment in the EU — and it performs an essential function for the efficient functioning of our society.

Shipping is one of the core modes of transport and — with aviation — the **most international transport sector**. It ensures global trade and supplies of vital raw materials and energy. The need for particular attention by policy makers throughout the EU becomes even more obvious when looking at some key figures:

- shipping carries nearly 90% of European external trade;
- European companies and residents today **own about 40%** of the world's shipping fleet;
- About 25% of the world fleet flies a European flag.

Citizens have strong expectations for **efficient, clean and customer-friendly** transport services. Companies and individuals demand transport services that better meet their needs — reliable, safe, flexible. And they are absolutely right. Consumers are asking not only about quality and price, but they increasingly want to know how any negative impacts of transport, both for cargo and for passenger transport, can be minimised. In recent years, **marine pollution** and **maritime accidents** were considerably reduced and the EU has established one of the most advanced regulatory frameworks for safety and for pollution prevention (lastly with the third Maritime Safety Package). The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) has been set up successfully and contributes strongly to these positive developments. Given the global nature of shipping, we are together with EU Member States committed to working towards global solutions, for example on reduction of greenhouse gases, in the framework of the IMO.

The Commission is currently preparing a new long-term strategy for the future of transport and mobility, in line with the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. I firmly believe that we have to intensify the smart connection of transport modes into an integrated intelligent transport system. Without of course neglecting the sector-specific issues – safety, environment, social and security. We will continue to pay careful attention to all these things. The maritime cluster is by its very nature best placed to play a central role in our thinking about better inter-modal infrastructure and service solutions. Indeed, maritime transport is a vital part of any overarching European strategy, as stressed by the Commission's maritime transport strategy until 2018. During the last 20 years the maritime transport sector has vastly benefitted from — and contributed to — global economic developments.

It has in fact been one crucial **enabler of increasing prosperity** in many regions of the world. This was made possible not least through the development of new markets and, in particular, the opening of existing markets to external players. Such opening of course depends on **reciprocal action** and the **respect of rules**. It depends on mutual trust and on a **level playing field** for all actors. Protectionism in the end helps nobody. Equal market conditions allow access to the right quality at the right price and are a strong incentive for enterprises around the globe to innovate and offer their products to markets all over the world. I believe open markets and equal treatment for all market players are necessary conditions for the continuing development of maritime transport. We therefore keep pushing for a successful outcome of the current WTO negotiations. In the meantime, we are pursuing the valuable bilateral discussions on liberalisation of maritime transport services with our main partners. I would like to mention especially the fruitful EU–China maritime transport agreement, as well as the negotiations with India and the maritime transport dialogues with Brazil, Japan, Norway, Russia, South Africa and the United States.

Ladies and gentlemen: there is something that, I fear, tends to be forgotten in times of prosperity and economic growth, as well as in times of economic slowdown: Sustainable business is all about **quality**. This is particularly true in a business like shipping, with the need for large investments and long lifespans for vessels. Commitment to quality and commitment to innovation — these are the two cornerstones of sustainable business. Innovation in technology, in our use of technology and in service quality will play a key role moving towards a sustainable, highly effective and integrated transport system. A system that delivers flexible, reliable and safe services for citizens and businesses. For this to succeed, we need to think in an integrated and modular way, beyond a single transport mode. I am committed to fighting administrative, legal and political barriers by supporting smart innovative solutions. Work on the e-Maritime concept and on inter-modal intelligent transport solutions will be a particular priority for my work in the coming years.

Quality and innovation is also about people: we need now, and even more in the future, highly skilled and motivated staff to safely and efficiently operate our high-tech ships. And we need skilled engineers and workers to design and build these ships. Unfortunately, seafarers seem to be an endangered species in some parts of the world. We therefore want to get more young people interested in shipping and its exciting and various career opportunities. We also need to address better working conditions and develop more open and flexible career perspectives. Luckily, there seems to be an increasing worldwide awareness of these matters. And it is a happy coincidence that 2010 — the IMO Year of the Seafarer — is the year we launch our work on the human factor in shipping. I have set up an EU task force which will help us prepare a comprehensive "social agenda" for employment and competitiveness in maritime transport, to be presented next year.

To conclude, I am particularly pleased that today's conference offers the opportunity for exchange on two vital points for modern and sustainable maritime transport. We should together aim for a better **level playing field** for all actors involved and we should further increase the **quality of shipping**. I am looking forward to stimulating exchanges and contributions from all world regions represented here.

I want to thank already now the organisers for all the good work that went into preparing this conference and the panel members for their thought-provoking ideas. I wish all of us an enjoyable conference.