

**Declaration of the Ministers of the Member States of the Central Commission for
Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR)**

**Germany, Belgium, France, Netherlands and Switzerland:
("Basel Declaration")**

The ministers responsible for navigation on the River Rhine of Germany, Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland met at the invitation of Switzerland, as chair of the CCNR, on 16 May 2006 in Basel and passed the following declaration:

We recall the importance of navigation on the Rhine, which with more than 70 per cent of the total volume of all inland water transport, constitutes an essential axis of European inland shipping, and offers a future-oriented, competitive means of freight transport which is well connected to rail and road and meets high security and environmental standards.

We reaffirm the principle of free navigation on the Rhine in accordance with the Mannheim Act and its additional protocols, and we are prepared to take all necessary measures to ensure the freedom of navigation.

We underline in this regard the important role and the competencies of the Central Commission for Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR), which ensures a high standard of security for inland shipping and promotes the protection of the environment and we renew the assurances of our support for its task of promoting the further development of navigation on the Rhine.

We support all efforts to achieve the sustainable and future-oriented development of European inland waterways. This includes the maintenance of the waterways, the provision of suitable infrastructure under the responsibility of the CCNR member States, as well as the implementation of the objectives of the EU Water Framework Directive co-ordinated between the inland shipping and water management sectors

We welcome the "Naiades" initiative of the European Union (EU) whose aim is to strengthen inland navigation in Europe on a sustainable basis. The CCNR wants to provide a substantial contribution to achieving the shared objectives in collaboration with the EU, the Danube Commission, other river commissions and all relevant players. The institutional co-operation between the CCNR and the EU should be deepened on the basis of the co-operation agreement of 3 March 2003, while respecting the competencies of both parties. We endeavour to intensify co-operation also with the other European river commissions in order

to promote the broadest possible harmonization of rules without creating additional bureaucracy.

We attach special importance to the objective of sustainable and environmentally-friendly navigation on the Rhine and other European inland waterways. To this end we aim to promote co-operation with the International Commission on the Protection of the Rhine. In the interest of enhanced environmental protection further progress is essential, in particular in reducing exhaust and fine-particle emissions, the level of sulphur in gas oil, and the fuel consumption of inland ships. This includes making full use of all available options including initiatives originating from the inland shipping and harbour industries, measures to generate positive incentives, training, and the dissemination of information. Such measures and initiatives should also apply to the existing fleet to enable the emission-reduction targets to be achieved as soon as possible.

We underline the major contribution of the navigation and harbour industries, acting as independent players within the market economy, to Rhine navigation and the national economies of the CCNR member states, and we reaffirm our readiness to search, in dialogue with this sector, for future-oriented solutions to its concerns.

We consider that the attractiveness of trades and professions in the field of Rhine navigation must be maintained and promoted through modern training programmes and up-to-date legal and employment conditions, and we call on the industry to contribute to this objective with appropriate measures.

We attach importance to the continued operation of Rhine navigation within a legal framework which is as simple, clear and harmonized as possible, and we instruct the CCNR to review the suitability and need of existing and future regulations on inland shipping while maintaining high security and environmental standards. The review of the regulations should be concluded as rapidly as possible to allow the CCNR to determine which rules are to be simplified or deleted by the end of 2007.

Basel, 16 May 2006