

DRAFT SPEECH

MARITIME AFFAIRS – North Adriatic multi-port gateway within the European maritime transport strategy

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY!

Venice, 17.04.2009

Distinguished Mr Chairman,
Representatives of the Commission,
Local Authorities,
Representatives of the industry,
Dear colleagues,

Slovenia welcomes the initiative for cooperation of North Adriatic ports in their joint appearance in competitive global ports market and intends to take an active part in this process.

2008 was the most fruitful year for the maritime sector in decades: the fares were at the highest level compared to the previous years; highest-ever number of new ships was built; shipyards received record-breaking number of orders and ports handled record amounts of goods. All this only emphasises the fact that the maritime sector is crucial for international trade. The current economic crisis also had an impact on transport of goods by sea, causing sharp falls in the number orders for these operations and consequently in the number of orders for transshipment services in ports. But we can nevertheless be optimistic about the future, as crisis like this one can also bring new opportunities. To revive the idea on cooperation of North Adriatic ports and the formation of a joint co-modal promotion centre is definitely one of them.

As we all know, in 2007 the European Commission presented a number of communications and strategic goals for the future of the maritime sector in the European Union. The communication on a European Ports Policy states that apart from dealing with safety, security and sustainable growth, we also need to provide port services in accordance with the principles of fair competition, financial transparency,

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non-discrimination and cost efficiency. Freight is often delivered to final users by land transportation from very distant ports, while many more suitable ports are located nearby. Everything is linked to the currently popular maritime routes from the Far East to North European ports. But having spoken with many Far East countries representatives recently, I am confident that interest in rethinking the gateway to European markets is currently quite high. The fact is that compared to other EU ports, North Adriatic ports represent the most optimal alternative for shipowners for cutting costs of maritime transport operations. It is only with this approach that we can build our joint vision for the future of North Adriatic ports. And we can only do it together.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would also like to underline that living in the current information society, we need to constantly strive to remove all administrative obstacles and achieve more efficient cooperation of all institutions. By doing this, we will help both the seafarers on ships and all others who work in maritime transport chain in achieving speedier and simpler door-to-door delivery of goods. This would also open the door to further incentives for development of short-sea shipping and motorways of the sea.

To conclude: it should be in the interest of all of us who participate in this project of North Adriatic ports cooperation to promote our ports as an alternative to Northern ones. We are located much closer to certain European markets, therefore we can contribute to cutting transport costs, less environmental pollution and consequently also to better satisfaction of European consumers.

Thank you.

Igor Jakomin

State Secretary

Ministry of Transport, Republic of Slovenia