

# Maritime Safety Conference

La Coruña, Spain  
12 February 2010

## Closing remarks by Vice-President Siim Kallas

- I would like to thank the Spanish Presidency and in particular the Secretary of State, Mrs Gutiérrez del Castillo, for having organised this conference on maritime safety and given me the floor to close it with some forward looking remarks.
- Coming together in La Coruña, we are still moved by the memory of the tragic accident of the Prestige that has struck this beautiful coast of Galicia facing the Atlantic Ocean. We are aware of the importance of international maritime transport for the economy but this is a reminder of the risks involved which we as policy makers need to control.
- Since the Prestige accident happened in 2002, we have studied the cause, we have drawn the lessons and invested heavily to reduce the risk of recurrence. Last year the Council and the European Parliament adopted the ambitious and comprehensive so-called **third maritime safety package**. As a result, the European Union has now the highest maritime safety standards worldwide. We now have to ensure the proper implementation of the new rules and standards and I am fully aware that this requires the continued efforts over the next months and years of national administrations, my services and EMSA.
- Beyond the immediate and essential question of protection, this further promotes the quality of European shipping. It gives it a competitive advantage. Our aim is to increase global safety standards and to create a

global level playing field, in which our maritime industry can successfully compete.

- The maritime safety policy is a key pillar of the Commission's **Strategy for Maritime Transport until 2018**, which has met with positive support from the stakeholders.
- During my mandate as Commissioner in charge of transport, I am committed to developing the various elements of this Strategy. I would like to focus today on two priority areas: (1) the greening of transport and (2) the human element.
- Europe, its industry and its citizens, need sustainable and environmentally friendly maritime transport services. The EU defends ambitious environmental goals, and the Commission has always emphasised the need for global solutions, especially on the reduction of greenhouse gases. The shipping sector will have to make its fair contribution in the fight against climate change in a way that is flag-neutral and does not lead to competitive distortions or carbon leakage.
- We will do our part by focussing on appropriate research measures towards cleaner shipping through better technologies. Our long-term goal is to aim for "zero emission, zero waste" ships.
- The "human element" is another pillar of our Strategy for Maritime Transport, and a crucial element for safety and quality shipping. I welcome the fact that the IMO has declared 2010 the international year of the seafarers. I would like us to look at a "social agenda" for seafarers, dealing with the promotion of the image of shipping and the profession, competencies of crews, life-long career perspectives onboard and on shore, as well as better working labour and living conditions for them.
- I will convene a Task Force of independent experts [chaired by the former Director General Sir Robert Coleman] to get independent advice on possible ways to combine the competitiveness of the European fleet with

social considerations for the seafarers. The continuing social dialogue will be another source of inspiration.

- Allow me a last remark regarding the international scene. As European Union we should promote our common values and common interests with a common voice at the international level. In this area, more cooperation is still possible and necessary as was unfortunately demonstrated when our recent proposal for a joint EU submission to IMO on green-house gases recalling commitments previously agreed at EU level did not find the necessary support amongst Member States.
- As a conclusion: I am looking forward to working together with you on all these issues. Maritime transport rightly plays a key element in our reflections about the competitive and sustainable future of transport. And the EU is able to act in the area of maritime safety in close cooperation between all partners: Member States, the Parliament, the Commission, EMSA, and of course stakeholders from the sector.