

Statement on the report of the group 'Transport 2000 plus': 'Transport in a fast-changing Europe'

(10 December 1991)

1. The Joint Committee welcomes this thorough report and would like to give its basic support to the opinions and recommendations therein. The report does not aim to be conclusive but it highlights the considerable work to be done to arrive at an urgently needed new strategy for transport in and around Europe.

2. By far the greatest volume of Community trade, both internal and external, moves by water, either sea or river transport, and shipping companies are major users of other modes of transport. As the prime organizers of combined transport, the liner shipping industry has long experience in this area and encourages its customers to utilize door-to-door services which, by their nature, make full and efficient use of the Community's existing intermodal transport infrastructure. The bulk shipping industry also plays a crucial role in the Community's trade and is also sensitive to problems in the transport infrastructure (e.g. ports and waterways).

3. It is to be hoped that recognition will be given to the maritime industry's role as a direct and indirect employer of EC nationals and as an important user, organizer and operator of intra-European transport, by the Committee being consulted on the work stemming from this report related to European transportation, including combined transport, revival of short sea shipping and infrastructure discussions.

4. The Committee is glad to note that intermodal sea transport (i.e. containers by sea, road, rail and inland waterway) is recognized as by far the most effective and progressive system of transport. The report also points out that coastal shipping de-

serves vigorous enhancement and that there are a number of very strong environmental and energy-saving arguments in favour of sea transport as an alternative to road haulage. The Committee supports the recommendation that the EC should encourage measures to improve the market share of coastal transport, including the creation of a chain of harbours of European interest. The employment prospects for EC seafarers would certainly be enhanced by such action. However, we note the omission in the report of the existing fleet of low aircraft river/sea ships. These vessels directly penetrate the inland waterway systems of Europe. In some major industrial areas, this mode of transport offers an interesting low-cost alternative for through-transport by avoiding transshipments at seaports.

5. There is certainly an ongoing growth of different forms of cooperation in the transportation sector which is being hampered by the insistence of overzealous interpretation of traditional rules of competition. The Committee agrees that more horizontal co-ordination is needed between the work of the Commission and the Directorates-General which are involved/connected with any part of a coherent and integrated transport policy, notably in the field of competition and environment protection and — as the report adds — also in the fields of social and technical regulations/standards, with due consideration to respecting international regulations and standards.

6. The Committee welcomes the new opportunities offered in the context of recent decisions to upgrade the EC railway systems and considers that this will give a much

needed impetus towards an efficient and effective European passenger and intermodal freight transport system for EC nationals.

7. The Committee supports the principle that the cost of transport infrastructure should be realistic and transparent and agrees that Community infrastructure needs much improvement — a task that lies in principle with the governments under a Community-wide policy, based on sound cost/benefit analyses. If this is to be financed through any form of taxes or levies and results in an increase in costs, the industry will look for considerable savings resulting

from the improved infrastructures to be financed in this manner.

8. In conclusion, the Committee would like to congratulate Commissioner Van Miert in taking this bold initiative on this important subject and also to congratulate the study group on its very professional report. It is to be hoped that the latter will not become yet another expert group report that is consigned to the shelf to gather dust. The Joint Committee, for its part, offers its full cooperation and expertise to DG VII in developing the maritime-related ideas and recommendations of the report.

