

Mr. Chairman, Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Belgium sincerely thanks the Ministry of Transport of the Netherlands, the Municipality of Rotterdam and the Port of Rotterdam Authority for hosting this important ceremony for the signature of the Rotterdam Rules.

Belgium also thanks the organisations and persons who have contributed to the successful outcome of the negotiations on the United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Carriage of Goods Wholly or Partly by Sea.

Belgium is honoured to participate in this historic event to express its support for the pursuit of a harmonised regime with regard to contracts of international multimodal carriage of goods at worldwide level.

International trade will of course be the first beneficiary. But worldwide harmonised rules are also an essential factor in the development of a sustainable mobility and transport, because worldwide harmonised rules will enable a better integration of sea transport in the multimodal transport, which is essential to reach that objective of sustainable mobility and transport.

Although Belgium firmly believes that the Rotterdam Rules can offer a unique opportunity to bring about such worldwide harmonised regime, it is not in a position to sign the Rotterdam Rules today. At this moment a number of issues still have to be examined. Belgium is also at present fully engaged in an extensive modernization of its national private maritime law. A further evaluation of the impact of the Rotterdam Rules on that important work is needed as well as a deeper reflection on some points of concern raised with regard to the integration of the Rotterdam Rules in the future Belgian private maritime law.

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