

Dear Chairman,

Distinguished Members,

Ladies and gentlemen,

- I am very honoured to be here today to present you priorities of the Slovak Presidency in the area of transport and tourism.
- As you can imagine, the 1st of July was a somewhat unusual Friday for us. Instead of breaking for a nice summer weekend, our job has actually just started. **The Slovak Republic has for the first time taken over rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU.** The circumstances could hardly be more challenging, given the latest developments. Nevertheless, we are ready and fully committed to take on our responsibility in steering the discussions among the Member States in the next 6 months. While closely co-operating with our trio partners, **we count on a good collaboration with you, the European Parliament, in advancing work towards strengthening the EU's internal transport market.**
- Let me take this opportunity, to inform you about our plans in the different transport areas.
- It goes without saying that in the area of **aviation**, safety plays a central role. The experiences from the past few years have only underlined this. Therefore, **the Slovak Presidency will further promote aviation safety.** Revision of the EASA regulation will contribute to this goal. Our Dutch colleagues achieved important progress in the negotiations on this file. We will continue the work with the objective to achieve **General Approach by the end of our mandate.**
- With a view to improving competitiveness of the European Aviation sector, the Transport Council held under the Dutch Presidency last month adopted **mandates** for the Commission to negotiate **comprehensive air transport agreements with third countries**, concretely with **ASEAN, United Arab Emirates, Turkey and Qatar.** As a Presidency we will monitor the progress of these negotiations. Should the negotiations reach substantial progress, **we are ready to open further mandates.**
- When it comes to **environmental questions**, **the image of transport has lately suffered a lot.** While we have seen decrease in emission production in other sectors, transport seems to be lagging behind. Hence, the sector is perceived by many as a polluter. During the Slovak Presidency, we will have the possibility to improve this **at the International Civil Aviation Organization General Assembly (ICAO)**, which takes place in late September. The Slovak Presidency will continue to co-ordinate the

preparation of a common position ahead of this event and will put best efforts into defending it in Montreal.

- Moving on to **shipping**, maritime transport, too, has a great potential to improve safety and emissions reduction. With this in view **the Slovak Presidency will facilitate the adoption of Council Decisions for the meetings of International Maritime Organization (IMO) Committees, in order to promote safety and reduce emissions in maritime transport.**
- In inland navigation our Dutch colleagues reached a General Approach on a proposal on the **recognition of professional qualifications**. Once implemented, it will contribute to better mobility of workers and boost interest in this profession. We now await adoption of the position of the European Parliament. I am confident that we can start negotiations on this proposal before the end of our Presidency term.
- After the successful conclusion of negotiations on regulation on ports liberalisation, to which I would like to congratulate both our predecessors, and you, the European Parliament, our agenda in maritime transport will be dominated by the recently presented **passenger ship safety legislation**. Our ambition will be to achieve **maximum progress in the Council** before handing the file over to our Maltese colleagues.
- As far as the **railway transport** is concerned, the Slovak Presidency is the first one after a rather long time, without the 4th railway package dominating its priorities. For this we should credit the Dutch Presidency, together with the previous Presidencies and, obviously, the European Parliament. Hence, the Slovak Presidency will only be dealing with procedural steps needed for its final conclusion.
- As far as **decarbonisation of transport** is concerned, we expect the **communication of the Commission in the course of this month**. Nevertheless, in terms of actions that can lead to sustainable, less-carbon dependent transport, **we need to see the bigger picture**. Innovations are needed; however they are not the silver bullet that will solve the bad quality of air in our cities and congested areas. **Innovations** have to be coupled with **appropriate infrastructure, more support for public transport, multimodal solutions including railway transport and cycling**. We need to find an effective way **to motivate people** to buy electric- or hydrogen-powered cars, or **consider cycling for shorter distances**, instead of taking a car. And we need to change people's mindset. I tried to contribute myself to this goal, by taking a bike to work.
- Moving on from transport to **tourism**, for which I am also responsible, **the Slovak Presidency will, in collaboration with the Commission, host the 15th European Tourism Forum**. The Forum will be taking place in Bratislava on 10.-11. October 2016.

The event should provide a platform for dialogue and exchange of views on topics crucial for the future of tourism in the EU. More specifically, this year's Forum will focus on: regulatory and administrative environment and digitalisation against the background of the intensively growing collaborative economy.

- Dear Members, let me conclude by saying that the transport sector faces many challenges on several fronts. We are witnessing a profound change of the mindset of the new generation, unprecedented technological progress, need to cope with climate change, and increasing competition from other parts of the world. Standing up to these challenges means that we should focus on priorities along 2 lines: **building up on the assets of the internal market** and **searching for sustainable solutions**. To achieve this, the Council and the European Parliament need to work very closely. The future is knocking on the door. And we should not be afraid to open it.
- Thank you very much and I am ready to answer any questions on our priorities you may have.