

**Speech of Dr Pál Völner, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Justice and chair of
the Hungarian National Navigation Alliance**

Reception on the occasion of the establishment of the Danube Commission and 70th
anniversary of the signature of the Belgrade Convention

Budapest, 2 October 2018

Distinguished Participants,

On behalf of the Hungarian National Navigation Alliance I would like to also greet our distinguished guests and thank you for accepting the invitation to our reception combined with a boat trip, celebrating the 70th anniversary of the formation of the Danube Commission established by the signature of the Belgrade Convention. It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you here, in Budapest, at the seat of the Commission.

First of all allow me to say a few words about the activities of the Hungarian National Navigation Alliance. In 2004, fourteen years ago it was established with the purpose of providing professional information for organizations active on water, helping them in enforcing their interests, and if necessary, providing organizational and co-ordination tasks. Recently those who are actively involved in navigation constitute a significant proportion of our membership, as the Alliance represents hundreds of members through its member organizations. Our membership includes organizations representing professional freight, passenger and ferry shipping, organizations providing background services for shipping and water sport organizations. These include the Alliance of Passenger Shipping (Személyhajósok Szövetsége), the Association of Hungarian Inland Water Freighters (Magyar Belvízi Fuvarozók Szövetsége), the National Alliance of Ferry Shipping (Révhajósok Országos Szövetsége) and the Hungarian Yachting Association (Magyar Vitorlás Szövetség) as well.

Since its formation, representatives of the Alliance have always been striving for their activities not to be confrontational, but to rather find solutions. With our persistent work this has led to a good relationship established with organizations interested in navigation, water transport, water sports or with bodies regulating or controlling their security from the side of the government, state administration and local-governments. Due to the special importance of the organization, its secretary general regularly participates on meetings of the General Assembly of Budapest related to navigation issues. The Alliance also seeks to be in a continuous contact with the Water Police.

Our Alliance is a public-benefit organization, which was deserved – among others – by preparing numerous proposals and giving opinions on draft laws in co-operation with organizations acting in legislation. As an example, I would like to mention that currently we are working on the preparation of exams for professional crew members taking into account market needs and the changing international standards. In addition, in the recent days, we also made proposals for navigation safety regulations in the area of the capital, whereby an official provision has already been issued. Co-operation is also improving in the field of the realization of local government investments related to our ports or I could also mention the organizations that maintain our waterways, with which we have an excellent relationship as well.

Our Alliance considers as its important task to provide members for a new nautical generation by helping its membership – and besides them organizations and persons dealing with navigation – primarily with providing professional training and education, giving qualification materials and professional opinions.

We are permanent participants of water events organized by governmental offices, where numerous disadvantaged people had the opportunity to enjoy shipping and being on water. Regarding our own events, I would like to highlight the Annual Spring Outbound Shipping as the opening event of the navigation season, with which the Alliance wishes to draw attention to shipping as a travel and tourism opportunity. This year, at the third occasion, about 30 vessels made a formation at the downtown area of the Danube, and numerous passengers – including hundreds of disadvantaged children – were taken to sightseeing cruises. Furthermore I consider equally important the fundraising action held in co-operation with the “Save a life!” Foundation. Each year crew members collect and donate money in order to fulfil a wish of a child who is sick or recovering but still under strict medical prescription.

As the chair of the Hungarian National Navigation Alliance I consider it important to emphasise that the relation between the Danube Commission and the Alliance has been excellent according to the experiences of the past years. Alongside of the European Union the Danube Commission is the only platform whereby the Hungarian navigation can enforce its interests, so it is indispensable to cultivate and strengthen this cooperation, since in the field of Danube navigation there is undoubtedly a prominent role of the Commission in the promotion of co-operation within the member states and non-members of European Union as well.

Thank you for your kind attention!