*Address by Her Majesty the Queen*

*“World Ports as Poles and Vectors of Sustainability”*

Port of Antwerp, 22 March 2018

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here in Antwerp with you today, for the launch of the World Ports Sustainability Program. As an Advocate for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs, I welcome this initiative. It is a very concrete effort by the International Association of Ports and Harbors to show global leadership to ports worldwide in integrating sustainability into their policies, using the SDGs as their baseline.

Today, on the second anniversary of the attacks in Brussels, I am thinking especially of the many victims of terrorism and their families. Working on sustainable development is also a way of fighting the root causes of terrorism.

So, I would like to start with a few words about the Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2015, the UN drew up a new 15-year sustainable development agenda, building on the successes of the Millennium Development Goals. The MDGs were instrumental in significantly reducing extreme poverty and infant mortality. At the same time, they helped increase access to elementary education in developing countries.

However, by their target date – 2015 – far too many people still lived in poverty. While too few had access to healthcare, education or decent employment. At the same time, it had become impossible to ignore climate change. Disasters caused by extreme weather conditions were increasing in frequency. Air, sea and land pollution were worsening fast.

The new Agenda 2030 takes a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to sustainable development. For every nation, every society has its social, economic and environmental challenges. We are all developing, all the time. Furthermore, it requires all of us - governments, private sector and civil society - to work in partnership to achieve the 17 goals the Agenda comprises.

The goals address the various social, economic and environmental challenges that the world faces today, and they are all interrelated. The promotion of affordable and clean energy has a positive impact on health, as well as on the climate. In its turn, the climate impacts health and the elimination of hunger.

I personally feel that quality education and healthcare, including mental healthcare, are absolutely fundamental goals that affect the outcomes of all the others. Agenda 2030 aims to transform our world, to make it a better place for everyone. It is up to each of us to make an effort to ensure no one is left behind.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ports have a particularly important role to play in achieving the SDGs. As global trading hubs, they are important drivers of economic prosperity. By definition, they are open to other cultures, new ideas, innovation. Ships and people from all over the world come and go. Besides the operations of the port authorities themselves, many other companies have facilities located onsite.

There may be pipelines for oil and chemicals; storage and packing facilities for perishable goods, such as fruits and vegetables, meat and fish. There will be warehouses for dry goods, and perhaps vehicle storage and processing centers.

In other words, a port is a major industrial hub as well. A large one provides employment for many thousands of people in a wide variety of jobs. Decent employment conditions and good environmental, health and safety policies are all essential to sustainable development.

It goes without saying that huge quantities of freight, and people, need transporting to and from ports, so they are surrounded by roads, railway lines and waterways. A sustainable transport sector is vital to support world trade and to facilitate the global economy. Another, related factor, which is important in any business, is energy efficiency. Together, sustainable mobility and energy policies play a major role, not only in limiting climate change, reducing pollution and conserving the environment, but in terms of our health, as well.

Pollution, of all kinds, is a major concern in ports, especially marine pollution and plastics. And we must all adjust our ways of thinking and our consumption patterns to turn our linear economy into a circular economy. Further digitalization of both port activities and the rest of the port community is another essential goal.

Ports, then, can make a major contribution to the achievement of the SDGs. The Port of Antwerp has a very active policy of promoting sustainability within the whole port community. Indeed, it was the first in the world to publish a Sustainability Report for the port community as a whole. And it continues to do so bi-annually.

All ports around the world can and should promote sustainable development. The launch of the World Ports Sustainability Program is proof that many ports, around the world, share this commitment to sustainable development.

Such commitment is inspiring. It gives us all confidence that together we can deal with the major challenges facing us. All over the world there is an increasing will to work together to find solutions to limit climate change, reverse environmental damage, promote economic growth, and improve people’s quality of life. We cannot afford to be complacent. Real change takes time to accomplish. We must all take action now to implement the SDGs, to safeguard the future of our planet.

I commend the World Association of Ports and Harbors for its initiatives in this regard. The relevance of your best practices will support and strengthen the belief that sustainability benefits us all.

I thank you.