EUROPEAN RAIL SUMMIT – WEDNESDAY 27TH APRIL 2016

**SESSION 1 – TOWARDS A SINGLE EUROPEAN RAILWAY AREA**

STATEMENT BY MINISTER FRANCOIS BAUSCH

Dear Colleagues, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Looking at today’s program I think you cover all the issues that need to be addressed to make rail great again!

Focus on transport as a service and the customers, taking investment needs serious and integrating the new digital possibilities are all aspects that we need to work on. In my view solid investment and technical harmonization with the right political will are the most important challenges towards more efficient and attractive rail.

Back to the single European railway area and the fourth railway package: I’ll start with congratulations to the Dutch presidency and the European parliament for the successful negotiations. In 2015 I was confident that we’d reach agreement in the Council and I felt the same confidence about the interinstitutional negotiations. Fortunately I was right. And more importantly - the outcome is an excellent compromise.

I am very satisfied with the result and I am sure Member states and the European Parliament will confirm the outcome very soon.

With this new reform we can finally stabilize the legislative framework. Both the rail sector and the administrations need stability in the longer run.

Now we have to implement correctly the new system and let it do its work. This will take time and we should give time to the new system. There should be no more modification before we have not been able to see the real impact of the fourth railway package. I am sure that we all agree on that, including the Commission. I do not want to see again as we do now with the fourth package that we modify provisions which have not entered into force. That is definitely not helpful to the sector.

A few words on the compromise: We found the right balance. We open up to competition and make sure such competition happens in a fair environment. We do as well provide for alternatives to make sure that the best rail services are being delivered. If the solution of direct awards is seen as the better choice, then direct award should be possible. For that purpose we deliver the tools to make sure that the best solution is chosen and correctly implemented.

In the governance directive I’d like to underline the importance of open access to infrastructure for all operators. Such access can only be limited if a public service is put in jeopardy. We foresee strong regulators. They will make sure that everyone plays by the rules and that competition is fair.

On the financial transparency and double mandate issues we managed to cut out the potential for discrimination without shaking up unnecessarily the internal life of our companies.

Regarding the PSO regulation we provide the tools to get the best possible services. The main new element that was introduced is performance. The overall goal is the promotion of rail in all regions of the European Union.

We are on the right track for a single European railway area. We have now tools to help us implement the most adapted solution for a given region or country.

Thank you very much for your attention.