

Acceptance of Rotterdam Rules by 16 countries

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Today, 23 September, sixteen countries have officially expressed their support for the new UN convention 'Rotterdam Rules'. The countries signed the convention that describes the rights and obligations involved in the maritime carriage of goods. Important seafaring nations such as the United States, Norway, Greece, France and the Netherlands are among the signatories. The Rotterdam Rules bring more clarity regarding who is responsible and liable for what, when, where and to what extent when it comes to transport by sea. The Rotterdam Rules will give world trade a boost, considering that 80% of world trade is conducted by sea. If the same law applies all over the world, this will promote international trade and make it more efficient and clearer.

The signing took place in Rotterdam, the city after which the UN convention is named. The following countries have signed the convention: Congo, Denmark, France, Gabon, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, Senegal, Spain, Switzerland, Togo and the United States of America. In addition to this, delegations from all over the world will be attending the signing ceremony. The UN convention will not take immediate effect. Only one year after 20 countries have ratified it the Rotterdam Rules will officially come into force.

The Rotterdam Rules are the first rules governing the carriage of goods by sea and connecting or previous transport by land. This used to require separate contracts. Also, responsibility and liability during the whole transport process are clearly demarcated. Furthermore, the convention puts in place the infrastructure for the development of e-commerce in maritime transport. This will mean less paperwork. The shorter turnaround times will reduce the chance of errors and lower costs.

The Rotterdam Rules are the result of inter-governmental negotiations that took place between 2002 and 2009. These negotiations took place within the United Nations Commission for International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), after the Comité Maritime International (CMI) had prepared a basic draft for the convention. On 11th December 2008 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Rotterdam Rules.