The Rotterdam Maritime Museum is creating an international platform for the maritime sector.

On 10 September 2012 Mayor Aboutaleb of Rotterdam opened a joint exhibition by the Maritime Museum Rotterdam and the China Maritime Museum in Shanghai. Called *'Routes 1600 – 400 years of marine history between the Netherlands & China',* it is about the centuries-old trading relationship between the two countries.

The bond between the Netherlands and China in the maritime industrial sector is already close and this exhibition by the two sister museums is strengthening it further.

The opening was followed by a business event set up by the Maritime Museum Rotterdam in the China Maritime Museum. More than twenty Dutch and Chinese companies and over two hundred of their key business contacts were present, emphasising this maritime relationship even more.

Underlining the cultural link between the cities

The Maritime Museum Rotterdam is working closely with the China Maritime Museum in Shanghai for the joint exhibition. Prized items from the collections of the two museums tell the story of the centuries-long maritime relationship between the Netherlands and China and the many ways in which they influenced each other.

The relationship between the sister port cities of Rotterdam and Shanghai provided the initiative for the joint exhibition. This link has been a very significant one for many years, both economically and culturally. In the 17th century, the Dutch East India Company laid the foundations for maritime cooperation. The maritime sector is still an important link between the two countries in 2012.

Frits Loomeijer, general manager, Maritime Museum Rotterdam says: *"This exhibition is a world first. This many excellent pieces from the Netherlands and China have never before been brought together. Being able to open this exhibition in Shanghai is, I feel, a nice cultural gesture to underline the maritime bond between the two cities."*

Reception follows exhibition opening

The Rotterdam and China maritime museums organised a business event following the opening of the exhibition. Dutch and Chinese companies such as the Rotterdam Port Authority, Imtech Marine and DSM Dyneema met in the cultural surroundings of the China Maritime Museum in Shanghai. Mr Aboutaleb, the Mayor of Rotterdam, and his counterpart from Shanghai were among the prominent figures at this business event. They had formally opened the exhibition earlier.

Ahmed Aboutaleb, the Mayor of Rotterdam said: *"I am extremely proud that we are able to follow up the presentation of the Rotterdam water pavilion at the World Expo in 2010 with a presentation of another important Dutch sector in China. The ports of Rotterdam and Shanghai are key access routes for each other. That comes strongly to the fore in this exhibition about our common history. The maritime and logistics sectors in the Netherlands and China have a great deal to offer each other and a great deal to share. This business event that the Rotterdam Maritime Museum has organised will certainly contribute to improving the profile of the sector and strengthening the business network."*

The museum as a bridge builder

Whether it is about the Port of Rotterdam, the offshore industry, short sea, the Rhine and inland navigation or ship building, the core business of the Maritime Museum Rotterdam is telling that story to young and old. The museum

is a maritime institute with an international focus, located in the port city of Rotterdam.

The Maritime Museum plays an important role in the maritime sector, both as a link between businesses and as a link to a broader audience. Bringing together partners within the commercial sector from Rotterdam to Shanghai is not only creating a maritime platform, but also provides new stories that the museum can tell its visitors. The Museum combines these stories from maritime practice with relevant unique items from its collection and presents them to over 130,000 visitors every year in easily accessible formats. These visitors often live and work in a port city, yet are unaware of the influence of the port and the maritime world on their own lives.

Fulco Vrooland, director Sales & Marketing IHC Merwede says: *“It is a sign of the times that the commercial sector and the cultural world are able to come together. What the Rotterdam Maritime Museum is doing in Shanghai is a prime example of cultural entrepreneurship. The quality of this exhibition and the organisation of the business reception that followed are at such a high level that we are delighted to be associated with it. Encounters like this between companies from the sector create interesting business opportunities for us.”*

Taking the exhibition to China

Working together with its sister institution the China Maritime Museum in Shanghai, the Maritime Museum Rotterdam presented this exhibition last year in Rotterdam, under the name ‘Yin&Jan’. This exhibition was supported by financial contributions from the Municipality of Rotterdam, VSB Fonds, AMPEK, DSM Dyneema, Wärtsilä, the Rotterdam Port Authority and Van Oord. Now in Shanghai, this is the first time that a maritime exhibition of this quality has been seen in China.