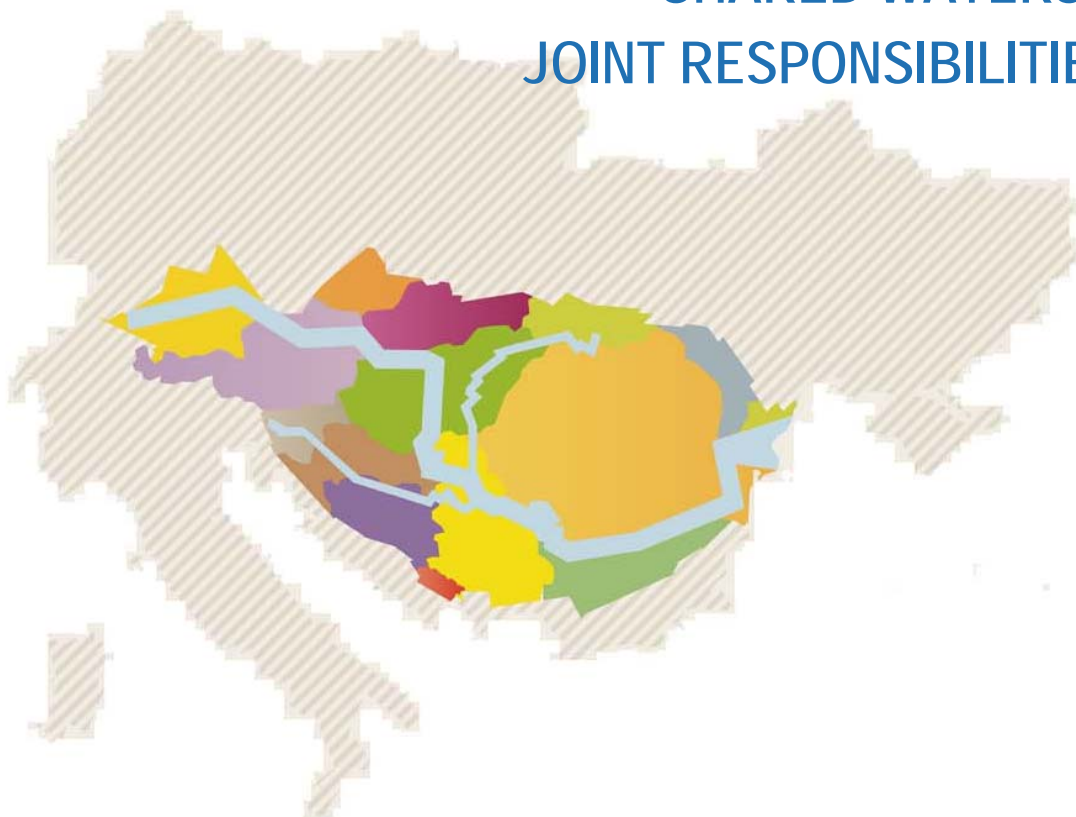


DANUBE DECLARATION

adopted at the Ministerial Meeting, February 16, 2010

DANUBE BASIN:
SHARED WATERS –
JOINT RESPONSIBILITIES



We, the Ministers, High Officials and the Member of the European Commission, being responsible for the implementation of the Danube River Protection Convention

The Danube River Basin – A Catalyst for Cooperation

(1) *recall* with gratitude that twenty years ago the fall of the iron curtain opened the door for the reunification of Europe. The signing of the “Convention on the Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River” (Danube River Protection Convention – DRPC) in 1994 in Sofia created the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR). Since then the ICPDR has been a catalyst for cooperation in water management in the Danube River Basin – the most international river basin worldwide. Today the Danube is again a lifeline in the heart of Europe.

(2) *appreciate* the accession of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia to the European Union in 2004 as well as the accession of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 which has extended the borders of the European Union to the Black Sea. *We support* the further enlargement process of the European Union as a successful policy for the sake of the whole of Europe and appreciate the intensive cooperation on water management between the EU and Non EU member states that exists in the framework of the ICPDR.

(3) *welcome* the fact that the European Council at its meeting in June 2009 invited the European Commission to present an EU strategy for the Danube region before the end of 2010 and *emphasize* the importance of water and water related ecosystems in the Danube region. *We underline* the role of the ICPDR as the major coordinating body in the region with regard to all water management issues and *offer* its experience and expertise for both the preparation and the implementation of the EU strategy. The Danube River Basin Management Plan and its Joint Programme of Measures should be considered as an integral part of the EU Strategy.

(4) *reaffirm* our appreciation and support for the successful steps to increase coordination and cooperation among the countries in the Sava and Tisza sub-basins of the Danube and for the evolving initiatives in the sub-basins of the Prut and the Danube Delta.

(5) *declare* our intention to enter into a targeted partnership between the ICPDR and other international river basins fostering thereby also the objectives and principles of the International Thies River Prize awarded to the ICPDR in 2007.

(6) *reconfirm* our commitment to contribute to the protection of the Black Sea, taking fully into account the Memorandum of Understanding with the Black Sea Commission and the options for coordination and cooperation presented by the new EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, keeping in mind that our most important contribution to a sustainable Black Sea is a healthy Danube.

(7) *express* our sincere gratitude for the financial support received from the UNDP/GEF Danube Regional Project in the years 1991-2006 which developed into a flagship model of good practice for applying Integrated Water Resources Management to other international river basins across the globe.

The Danube River Basin Management Plan

(8) recalling the political and environmental conditions in the Danube river basin twenty years ago, characterized by a lack of basin wide cooperation and heavy pollution, *appreciate* the significant progress achieved through the cooperation of our countries in the ICPDR *and declare* our ongoing commitment to living rivers in the Danube basin.

(9) *reaffirm* our political commitment to make all efforts to implement the EU Water Framework Directive throughout the whole Danube River Basin.

(10) *approve* the Danube River Basin Management Plan (DRBM Plan) as a milestone of our cooperation in the ICPDR. To develop the first DRBM Plan in line with the complex and ambitious regulations of the EU Water Framework Directive was a particular challenge in a river basin as large and diverse as the Danube basin. *We are convinced* that the DRBM Plan will result in a significant first step towards our ultimate goal to achieve the “good status”, or where appropriate the “good potential” of water bodies. To prepare the DRBM Plan *we had to break new ground* in many areas and *are fully aware* of the fact that there are still serious gaps and uncertainties which need to be addressed in the next cycle of implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive.

(11) *commit* ourselves to implement the Joint Programme of Measures, which forms an integral part of the DRBM Plan (Part A), as well as our national programmes of measures. The Joint Programme of Measures is based on the national programmes of measures, entails some additional joint initiatives and describes the estimated effects on the basin-wide scale. The Joint Programme of Measures will be our common roadmap guiding our activities and ensuring the necessary harmonisation of actions at the basin-wide scale. We *recognize* that there are differences between EU Member States and Non EU Member States with regard to their legal obligations and financial resources which need to be taken into consideration.

(12) in view of the financial resources needed to implement the Joint Programme of Measures and the national programmes of measures and taking into consideration the financial constraints some countries in the Danube River Basin might face in this regard *ask* the ICPDR to organize in 2010 a conference with the relevant international financial institutions and donors in order to draw the attention to the priorities defined in the Joint Programme of Measures and to identify additional options and mechanisms for the financing of projects, in particular for wastewater treatment facilities in Non-EU countries.

The Significant Water Management Issues

(13) *recognize* that the Danube river basin is a very diverse river basin, characterized by natural stretches as well as by heavily modified parts, some areas being rich in biodiversity whilst others are seriously polluted. Nevertheless we *have identified* – from the basin-wide perspective – four topics as the most significant water management issues: organic pollution, nutrient pollution, hazardous substances pollution, hydromorphological alterations. The DRBM Plan and the Joint Programme of Measures focus on these issues and – as a separate item - on the identified important transboundary groundwater bodies.

(14) *state* with regard to **organic pollution** that the implementation of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive in the EU Member States and the committed construction/rehabilitation of wastewater treatment plants in Non EU Member States will result in a considerable reduction of BOD₅ and COD loads but will not be sufficient to achieve the environmental objectives of the EU Water Framework Directive on the basin-wide scale by 2015.

(15) *are committed* to speed up the construction and rehabilitation of wastewater collection systems and treatment plants wherever possible and *appeal* to the international financial institutions and donors to give priority to this process. *We are determined* to undertake significant further efforts in the second cycle of the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive with the aim to realise wherever possible the removal of phosphorus in wastewater treatment plants >10,000 Population Equivalents by 2021.

(16) *state* with regard to **nutrient pollution** that - due to the measures made operational until 2012- the nitrogen and phosphorus emissions to surface waters in 2015 will be about 12%, respectively 25%, lower compared to the average of the years 2000-2005. The load to the Black Sea will reach a level below the present state but still about 40% above that of the 1960's for nitrogen and about 15% for phosphorus. Keeping in mind our long-term goal - as agreed in 2001 in the Memorandum of Understanding between the International Commission for the Protection of the Black Sea and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River - to reduce the loads of nutrients discharged to such levels necessary to permit the Black Sea ecosystems to recover to conditions similar to those observed in the 1960s, *we agree* on the need for additional initiatives.

(17) even though the implementation of the Nitrate Directive in the EU Member States and an improved implementation of the concept of Best Agricultural Practice in the Non EU Member States will reduce nutrient pollution from agriculture *we are concerned* that a stronger increase in the intensity of the agricultural development in some areas, might offset these pollution reductions. Therefore *we ask* the ICPDR to organize - in close cooperation with the European Commission and involving both the agricultural and water management ministries of our countries - a workshop focussing on the relevant instruments of the EU Common Agricultural Policy and Best Agricultural Practices for ensuring reduction of agricultural pollution.

(18) *see* the introduction of limitations on phosphate in detergents as a particularly cost effective and necessary measure to complement the efforts of implementing urban wastewater treatment and as Ministers of the Danube countries *commit* ourselves to initiate the introduction of a maximum limit for the content of total phosphorus of 0.2 to 0.5% P weight/weight, in laundry detergents for consumer use, if possible by 2012 and to work towards a market launch of polyphosphate-free dishwasher detergents for consumer use until 2015.

(19) *state* with regard to **hazardous substances pollution** that we face a lack of knowledge on the sources, pathways, discharges and losses of hazardous substances in the Danube River Basin. It is estimated that the implementation of the relevant EU directives and the widespread application of Best Available Techniques/Best Environmental Practices will reduce the hazardous substances pollution but not be sufficient to achieve the environmental objectives of the EU Water Framework Directive by 2015.

(20) *ask* the ICPDR to ensure the intensification of the monitoring of hazardous substances and to make best use of the relevant EU instruments, e.g. European Pollution Release and Transfer Register reports and reporting of EU REACH as well as the inventory on the new EU Environmental Quality Standards Directive, for monitoring and controlling these substances and to encourage the non EU member states to cooperate in these activities.

(21) *state* with regard to **hydromorphological alterations** that – notwithstanding the manifold measures made operational until 2012 - the interruption of river and habitat continuity, the disconnection of adjacent wetlands/floodplains and hydrological alterations will still have a significant impact on water status in 2015. In view of the existing impacts we *give* particular importance to infrastructure projects which have to be implemented only after a thorough needs assessment and observing all legal requirements as well as best environmental practices and best available techniques.

(22) *reconfirm* our commitment to further develop and make full use of the ecological prioritisation approach for measures to restore river and habitat continuity in order to ensure that they are ecologically most efficient.

(23) *welcome and support* in this context the joint initiative of the ICPDR and relevant stakeholders for a feasibility study for providing the conditions for the migration of sturgeon species and other migratory species beyond the Iron Gates Dams and *ask* the ICPDR to intensify its efforts to secure the funding for this study.

(24) highly *appreciate* the “Joint Statement on Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection” elaborated and adopted by the ICPDR, the Danube Commission and the International Sava River Basin Commission as a vital contribution to developing sustainable inland waterway transport

on the Danube and its tributaries integrating both economic and environmental aspects in the planning and implementation of navigation infrastructure projects, *call for* its comprehensive application and *support* the follow up process preparing a “Manual on Good Practices in Sustainable Waterway Planning”.

(25) aware of the fact that hydropower plants offer an additional reduction potential for greenhouse gases but recognizing as well their negative impacts on the riverine ecology *ask* the ICPDR to organize in close cooperation with the hydropower sector and all relevant stakeholders a broad discussion process with the aim of developing guiding principles on integrating environmental aspects in the use of existing hydropower plants, including a possible increase of their efficiency, as well as in the planning and construction of new hydropower plants.

(26) *state* with regard to groundwater quality that the measures to control surface water pollution will have a positive effect on groundwater quality as well. We *agree* that nevertheless additional measures to prevent losses of pollutants to groundwater are needed and national legislation to prohibit direct discharges of pollutants into groundwater is required.

(27) *state* with regard to groundwater quantity that additional measures are needed to ensure that available groundwater resources are not exceeded by the long-term annual average rate of abstraction including putting in place requirements for prior authorization of abstractions.

Emerging Issues

(28) *underline* the growing importance at the basin-wide scale of some additional, emerging issues, such as the quality and quantity of sediments, invasive alien species, micro-pollutants and thermal pollution, and *ask* the ICPDR to intensify its related investigations and monitoring in order to prepare a comprehensive analysis and – if necessary – appropriate measures for the second DRBM Plan in 2015.

Impacts of Climate Change and Climate Adaptation

(29) *emphasize* that the impacts of climate change will increase and develop into a significant threat in the Danube River Basin if the reduction of greenhouse gases is not complemented by adaptation measures. *We appreciate* that the DRBM Plan draws some first conclusions and identifies future tasks in this regard.

(30) *ask* the ICPDR to develop until 2012 a Climate Adaptation Strategy in the Danube River Basin. This strategy should be based on a step-by-step approach and encompass an overview of relevant research and data collection, a vulnerability assessment, ensure that measures and projects are climate proof respectively “no regret measures” and ensure that climate adaptation issues are fully integrated in the second DRBM Plan in 2015.

Flood Risk Management Issues

(31) keeping in mind the severe flood events we have suffered in the past causing the loss of human life and immense damage to our citizens and economies as well as the expected impacts of climate change *reaffirm* our conviction that flood prevention and protection are not short term tasks but permanent tasks of highest priority.

(32) *commit* ourselves to make all efforts to implement the EU Flood Risk Management Directive throughout the whole Danube River Basin and to develop one single international Flood Risk Management Plan or a set of flood risk management plans, based upon the ICPDR Action Programme for Sustainable Flood Protection and the sub-basin plans, coordinated at the level of the international river basin district by 2015 making full use of the existing synergies with the DRBM Plan.

(33) *support* the ongoing Danube FLOODRISK project implemented within the South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Programme aiming at provision of hazard maps and flood risk maps for the Danube River floodplains and aspire to extend this initiative and coordinated methodologies when completed throughout the Danube River Basin.

Public Participation

(34) *appreciate* the fruitful cooperation with our accredited observers in the ICPDR as well as all other relevant stakeholders, in particular the input we received as result of the public consultation of the DRBM Plan and the ICPDR stakeholder conference in June 2009.

(35) *are determined* to further strengthen our public participation activities building on existing elements including the celebration of “Danube Day”, Danube Art Masters competition, and the publication and use of the school-kit “Danube Box”.

(36) *acknowledge* the positive benefits that have been generated through partnership with business and the commitments that have been made through “Business Friends of the Danube” and *continue* to seek cooperation with the business sector as necessary in realizing the goals of the Danube River Protection Convention.

Next steps

(37) *ask* the ICPDR to coordinate an interim report describing progress in the implementation of the Joint Programme of Measures and the national programmes of measures by the end of 2012.

(38) *appreciating* the very valuable results of the previous Joint Danube Surveys in 2001 and 2007 *request* the ICPDR to prepare a third Joint Danube Survey (JDS 3) to be held in 2013 and *commit* to secure the necessary funding.

(39) *ask* the ICPDR to review and update the DRBM Plan and the Joint Programme of Measures by the end of 2015

(40) in view of the fact that the review and update of the DRBM Plan as well as the Flood Risk Management Plan(s) need to be prepared by 2015 *declare* our intention to convene our next Ministerial Meeting in 2015/2016.

(end)