

Minutes

3rd Meeting on the Follow-up on the Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection in the Danube River Basin

Vienna, Vienna International Centre, April 5 -6, 2011

Welcome and Introductory Statements

Mr Weller on behalf of ICPDR President M. Melenevskyi welcomed the participants to the meeting.

Mr Istvan Valkar of the Secretariat of the Danube Commission provided introductory remarks on behalf of the Danube Commission.

Mr Dejan Komatina of the International Sava River Basin Commission provided introductory remarks on behalf of the Sava Commission.

1) Progress in navigation, environmental protection and regional development – Developments at the EU

Mr Colin Wolfe on behalf of DG Regio expressed appreciation for the contributions from the Danube Commission, ICPDR and ISRBC in the development of the Danube Strategy. He noted that without these contributions two important pillars of the strategy could probably not have been developed. He stressed the need to make sure the strategy works and that there is balance between two big priorities – a) mobility, and b) protection of the environment.

There is interest to see that navigation in the Danube is improved and that absolutely at the heart of the strategy is the fact that the Joint Statement needs to be taken into account. It is important that improvement in the navigation in certain sections is mentioned and acknowledged and that this improvement takes place.

He noted, however, that the targets in the strategy came into the process very late and were intended to be providing identifiable goals that could be evaluated. It has been agreed that the targets would be further developed with stakeholders and that this was particularly necessary in the case of the navigation goals.

He concluded his remarks by noting that the Commission puts high priority on integration and he very much welcomes the interest in integration that is demonstrated by this meeting through the participation of officials from both the environment and navigation sectors.

Ms Marieke van Nood on behalf of DG Environment recalled the participation in the early meetings in preparation of the Joint Statement and reminded the delegations that the Joint Statement had emphasized a case by case approach in making fairway. She noted as well that there was a need for having and promoting good examples of where implementation is happening. She provided an update on developments of the EU related to water protection including the actions underway to prepare a Guidance document on the application of Natura 2000 for waterways and that in 2012 the Commission will present a Blueprint to Safeguard EU waters.

Questions were raised following the presentations from WWF and DEF in connection with the targets of the Strategy related to navigation. The revision of the targets was welcomed and it was requested to involve NGOs in the process. It was also stressed that this new target should move beyond reference to the different AGN classifications as the case by case approach of the Joint Statement implies.

2) Current State of IWT bottleneck projects in Danube countries

The Chairman of this session, Horst Schindler of the Danube Commission introduced the session which provided input on the developments related to specific bottlenecks in the Danube.

Germany (Straubing-Vilshofen) – Ms Sabine Islebe of Germany provided a statement on behalf of Mr van Rimscha on the status of the study for this area. The information included the description of the overall work packages for the study and the timetable of reporting.

DEF expressed the view that there were some difficulties with the study and the relationship between various participants. Ms Islebe explained that she could not provide detailed response to criticism because she is not fully informed about the study nor responsible for it.

Austria (project East of Vienna) – Mr Robert Toegel of Via Donau presented the status of the project and began by stressing that within this section of the river there is a process of deepening underway which means the channel is 2-3.5 cm deeper per year. The lack of sufficient depth for vessels in this area means that the loads are at only 60% of capacity. The different elements of the project were presented including the bank renaturalization, the connection of old arms, and the stabilization of the fairway. This latter part of the project is planned to take place on a 3 km stretch and all the Environmental Impact Assessment procedures have been followed.

Following the presentation, Mr Holcik expressed concern that the project provided additional sedimentation in the Gabčíkovo dam area and that dead trees from the project were floating downstream to Slovakia. Mr Toegel and Mr Habersack said that these issues had been dealt with in bilateral discussions with Slovakia and that there is a programme to monitor trees that showed that the project was not responsible for trees and large wood pieces ending up in Gabčíkovo. It was stressed that the longterm purpose of

the project is to reduce the sediment transport from this stretch of river and that scientific agreement that this would be happening has been reached.

Slovakia (IWT and Environment) – Mr Vladimir Novak of Slovak Waterborn Transport Development Agency provided information about the new formation of the Agency and the legal basis for its activities. The Agency has been established since January 2011 and has as a priority to address three main bottlenecks on the Slovak portion of the Danube. These are: 1) Hungarian/Slovak stretch, 2) the area from Bratislava to the Austrian border, and 3) the old Bridge in Bratislava.

The representative of SECI asked if specific projects had been begun and Mr Novak responded that the projects have not yet started.

Hungary – A written Statement Prepared by **Mr T. Marton** of Hungarian Ministry of National Development was read to the meeting by Philip Weller. The statement is attached.

The chair of the session expressed concern that there was not a representative of the authorities to present the needed information and expressed the view that there is a general lack of transparency about the activities taking place in Hungary. WWF noted that the ongoing project includes the Strategic Environmental Assessment, the Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA), the Environmental Impact Assessments and the analysis based on the 4.7 chapter of the WFD. These should be carried out by the end of November 2011. The Consortium has not started the 2nd report of the SEA, the CBA and the 4.7 analysis. It is not clear how this work can be done in the remaining time in adequate quality and when and where the results will be made available.

Serbia and Croatia – Mr Dusko Isakovic presented information about the situation related to bottlenecks in Serbia and Croatia on behalf of both countries. He stressed the need for taking account of appropriate environmental directives and the Joint Statement in the planning of projects and noted that there was a bilateral Commission to address the joint section. Based upon the works proposed for the common section there were four structures built on the Croatian side of the most critical bottleneck area. It is proposed that additional works would be built in Serbia but the funding has not been made available for these yet. Out of 57 possible works it is proposed that only 19 would be done.

The representative of DEF stated that he understood from Croatian colleagues that some activities had been done without an EIA and that there was extensive gravel extraction taking place without permits. Mr Isakovic said there had been EIA's done and that a new law in Croatia prevented extraction without permit.

Romania & Bulgaria (ISPA I and II projects) - Ms Catrinel Catalina DUMBRAVA-ANDREI of River Adm. of the Lower Danube presented information on the projects on the Romanian territory of the Danube (ISPA 1) which the River Administration of the Lower Danube is the beneficiary of. She provided the history of the

project and explained that the project had been stopped because of environmental concerns and that a decision was made to put in place a monitoring programme. The tender for the environmental monitoring programme has been held and a contract signed with the winning organization. The monitoring will take place over 3 months and involve specific consideration of sturgeon migration.

The project for the common section with Buglaria (ISPA 2) is nearing completion and there is planned to be a meeting on selection of options for measures proposed. The EIA procedure would then be put into place for the project.

Philip Weller commented that it seems that the developments related to the ISPA 1 project are very positive and he complimented the Ministry of Transport and Romania for making the decision to revise the project taking account of environmental concerns and in particular developing the needed monitoring programme.

Marieke van Nood of the EU stated as well the strong support for the actions that have been taken and expressed appreciation for the very clear and transparent presentation of the project situation.

The question was raised about the upcoming meeting on ISPA 2 and the bilateral EIA and Ms Dumbrava indicated she did not have sufficient information. It was therefore proposed that there be a mail sent to the Ministry of Transport by the meeting chair to ask for this information in written form.

Ukrainian Danube – Ms Olena Proskura of Ministry of Infrastructure of Ukraine and **Mr Ihor Shevchenko** of Delta-Pilot presented a statement about developments that have occurred in the Danube Delta of Ukraine and along the Chilia arm of the Delta. The navigation route of Ukraine through the Danube Delta was developed as a way to have a diversification of transport options and it is a project as part of Corridor VII. There is an increase of traffic along this stretch as a result of the works that have been carried out.

Sava river – Mr Zeljko Milkovic of ISRBC presented an update of the work going on along the Sava River to restore navigation. Mr. Milkovic introduced the decision of the ISRBC on the future class of the Sava River waterway (i.e. class Va on the section Belgrade – Brčko (cca. 230 rkm) and class IV on the section Brčko – Sisak (cca. 370 rkm)), emphasizing that, although the class Va was shown to be economically feasible on the whole waterway, the class reduction on the most demanding river section is planned, taking environmental concerns into account. Although the project started before the final acceptance of the Joint Statement, the principles of sustainable development have been followed (e.g. introduction of one-way traffic in sharp river bends instead of the cross-cutting of the bends). The EIA study for the section Brčko - Sisak has been finished and, after public hearings, accepted in Croatia. The development of the detailed design of the waterway will be a next opportunity for all relevant stakeholders to be actively involved in the project development and to have a direct influence on the final outcome. In this regard, the ISRBC is planning to establish a coordination body for the future project development.

Discussion

A general discussion of the information presented on the different projects took place to end the day. The representative of the Austrian Environment Ministry expressed the view that there appeared to be parallel processes taking place – on the one hand the river basin management plan existed and on the other navigation planning. The two did not seem to be coming together as much as they should.

WWF expressed the view that there was some new information but was missing an update on how the Joint Statement has been followed..

Wednesday, April 6, 2011

Mr Dejan Komatina of ISRBC chaired the morning session and welcomed all the delegates and thanked the ICPDR for the reception the previous evening. He introduced the presentation of Mr Bernabei.

Presentation on EU Developments and Actions to Improve Inland Navigation – Mr Cesare Bernabei of DG Move

Mr Bernabei explained that in future DG Move would not use the word corridors to communicate about transportation but a stronger focus on multi-modal transport would be happening. Under NAIADES there are actions to improve the fleet and this should not be forgotten. The Strategy of the EU is to ensure that bottlenecks are removed and using the principles of the Joint Statement.

3) Practical aspects for sustainable IWT

Progress in the Platina Project – Mr Simon Hartl of Via Donau presented the work packages of PLATINA and distributed the most recent fact sheet of the project. The 5 main activities are all important and are actions needed to improve navigation. Significant progress has been made in development of River Information Systems and in education actions. The success of PLATINA is also related to the network of organizations that are working in the umbrella of PLATINA in a constructive way.

The PLATINA Manual on Good Practices in Sustainable Waterway Planning – Mr Philip Weller of the ICPDR introduced the Manual on Good Practices and highlighted the efforts that had been taken to distribute it. He suggested that maybe more targeted work could be done to reach waterway planners with the information.

The representative of the Czech Republic explained that the manual had been translated into Czech language and that this version which they hoped to print might be useful for the Slovak Republic also.

4) Improving and securing the application of the Joint Statement

Ms Ivana Kunc and Mr Horst Schindler of the Danube Commission presented information on the JS system for information exchange and developments at the Danube Commission. Ms Kunc provided detailed information on progress in developing a waste management system for navigation on the Danube under the WANDA project, what already lead to several decisions of the Danube Commission during its latest Plenary Session in December 2010.

Mr Schindler addressed the actions and activities related to infrastructure and fairway parameters and introduced the laws of physics which limit developments in ships' design and explained that the existing fleet is already adapted to the rivers. He appealed to a system of decision making involving all the interests, navigation, flood protection, energy, environmental protection. He stressed the need to harmonize the legal requirements of the fairway (Decisions of the DC, AGN, EUSDR) with respect to necessities based on physical laws. He emphasized that the constraints of navigation are not only depth but often width and that there is often a lot of room for adjusting the fairway in connection with these two parameters.

5) Future perspectives of integrated waterway transport in Europe and the Joint Statement – Chaired by Mr Philip Weller of ICPDR

The Chair opened the session with some summary remarks from the discussions that had taken place. He noted that based on the comments from the earlier discussions some recommendation for action had been proposed.

These included

- 1) That there was a need for a more systematic reporting on the situation in the different bottlenecks. One possible way to do this was to have an update provided in a template that allowed the actions to be compared.
- 2) Information from Hungary, Germany and connected with the Romanian/Bulgarian Project (ISPA 2) presented at the meeting was not complete and a letter on behalf of the meeting should be sent to the authorities responsible for these projects to provide a written report on some key questions raised.
- 3) The Joint Statement process was seen as being beneficial for the Danube Strategy and the inputs from this meeting should be used by the Priority Area coordinators and the future meetings of our group should involve the Priority Area coordinators.
- 4) There appears to be some possible basis for additional activities of training using the PLATINA manual. These is particularly the case because there are new administrations in some locations.
- 5) There remains a challenge at the national level to connect navigation authorities and environmental ministries.

- 6) Future funding of PLATINA could be used to support the Joint Statement process.

Results and conclusions of the workshop

A general discussion was held on the workshop. Mr Rast of WWF emphasized his disappointment that we have not progressed from the earlier discussions and that we are stagnating in our efforts. He stated that there were too many questions unanswered in the presentations and a lot of projects taking place with no reference to the WFD. He suggested that the reports at the meeting should be presented in advance, that a guidance on the reports should be prepared with references to the Joint Statement, and that meetings should be used to discuss progress and key issues.

Mr Holcik stated that one way to address problems of navigation was to build dams that created a backwater with adequate depth for navigation, as there are many good examples on Danube River in Austria and Germany, but also on other rivers in Western Europe. Mr Bernabei stated that he thought there had been significant progress since the early meetings and this is evident in the Danube Strategy and two important projects in Calarasi and in Straubing Vilshofen. He emphasized it was important to continue the process. Mr Komatina suggested that the meeting was both good and bad. He stated that we had not gotten a full balance with Environment and Navigation but that we were getting closer. Mr Nagel of DEF stressed the need to be more realistic and to have more precise reporting according to the principles of the Joint Statement. He suggested that the three Commissions could guide this process more in this direction. Mr Schwaiger of Austria suggested that the presentations were providing information but it was not comparable. The structuring of the presentations was needed. The nature and specific elements of each bottleneck need to be clearly stated. He suggested that the Danube Commission provide a short background paper on the bottlenecks. He also proposed that this meeting should continue in the form it has but that it should be linked in future to the Danube Strategy. Marieke van Nood emphasized the need to keep credibility by having good example of applying the Joint Statement. She expressed the need for increased transparency in the projects and offered to have DG Env to provide support to countries where needed. Mr Manzano reiterated the concern that the reports did not tell the whole story and suggested that there are some areas where there is win/win scenarios and some areas where it is not possible. Mr Zanetti suggested that drafting of TORs for projects needed to get attention because this often restricts what can be evaluated or included in a project.

Mr Weller summarized the conclusions by noting that there appeared to be a general consensus on the direction needed in future – toward more transparency and systematic reporting. He suggested that perhaps the EU could fund some additional capacity to support this effort and that the three Commissions would meet to review the results of this meeting.

Closure of the Meeting

Mr Schindler on behalf of the Danube Commission, Mr Komatina on behalf of the ISRBC and Mr Weller on behalf of the ICPDR thanked the participants for their involvement in the meeting and wished everyone a safe trip home.