

**Statement**  
**by the Representative of Ukraine**  
**at the Third Joint Meeting of the Danube Commission,**  
**International Sava River Basin Commission**  
**and International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River**  
*(Vienna, 5-6 April 2011)*

**Dear Mister Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Participants and Guests,**

First of all, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the host party for an excellent organization of this meeting and opportunity to deliver this speech and present the position of Ukraine regarding those very important issues faced by the Danube Region that are being considered here.

Taking this opportunity let me inform you that according to the Order of the President of Ukraine as of December 2010 the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Ukraine is being reformed into the Ministry of Infrastructure of Ukraine. The newly founded Ministry extends its functions and is responsible for the infrastructure development of all the modes of transport, road complex, communications and tourism. This will grant new opportunities for further development of transport and infrastructure complex of Ukraine, including the development of potential of the inland waterways.

I'd like to note that the topic and timing of this meeting are very appropriate in the context of crucial challenges that need to be dealt with by the European community in order to ensure the environmentally sustainable development of navigation in the Danube Basin.

We are convinced that these challenges can only be tackled through joint effort of all Danube countries and taking into account their legitimate interests that are based on relevant international legal mechanisms.

Ukraine is an integral part of all European processes, including those that concern the Black Sea and Danube Basins. Due to its geopolitical position, Ukraine is a strategic player in the system of the European inland navigation, being located at the junction of crucial transport routes connecting West and East, North and South.

In this respect, the Danube Delta where protected areas and human activities are closely intertwined deserves special attention. The Danube Delta is a unique wetland ecosystem that supports rich biological diversity comprising a great number of plant and animal species, including rare and endangered species. That is why the Danube Delta has been included into the UNESCO World Heritage List comprising 200 most valuable natural sites. The combination of rich natural resources and unique geographical setting has promoted the intensive development of various human activities and resource uses for over four hundred years. First and foremost, this relates to the utilization of Danube's transport and irrigation potential.

However, the uncontrolled development of large-scale water management facilities in the Danube Basin has caused adverse environmental impacts on the Danube Delta. The above mentioned factors have caused the progressive

disappearance of a number of branches (Stepovy, Dunayets, Prirva, Limba and Bilhorodsky) and depletion of the Kyslytsky Branch. Sediments formerly carried to the Black Sea with river flow are now deposited within the inner Kilia Delta, causing progressive sedimentation. As regards the Vylkove Town, which is extensively visited by tourists from all over Europe, currently suffers from the drying out of its street canals. Water levels have dropped due to flow redistribution, and this has affected natural spawning areas for numerous fish species. Water depths continue to decrease in both open, semi-closed and closed sections of the Delta. The progressive decrease in flow availability has affected floodplain meadows and associated spawning grounds for fish and feeding grounds for birds. Generally, the redistribution of river flow in favour of the Romanian part of the Delta, caused by the implementation of large scale flow management projects, has triggered the environmental degradation processes in the Ukrainian part of the Danube Delta, including the Danube Biosphere Reserve.

In order to realize the transit potential of the Ukrainian part of the Danube region the Resolution of the Government of Ukraine “On the Approval of the 2004-2010 Integrated Development Programme for the Ukrainian Part of the Danube Delta” was adopted at the end of March 2004, which provided a framework for the implementation of the Danube-Black Sea Deep Navigation Route in the Ukrainian part of the Danube Delta.

This navigation route is an international waterway project designed to enhance the transit potential of the Danube River and provide a greater degree of diversification in existing freight transportation arrangements that may be used by all European countries to deliver goods from the Black Sea region to the inland ports in the EU. The project is an integral element of the 7<sup>th</sup> Pan-European Transport Corridor.

As compared to all other man-made channels developed in the western section of the Delta, the use of this natural route is a much safer option, both environmentally and operationally. This fact has been confirmed by the results of the integrated environmental monitoring, which have demonstrated the absence of any significant transboundary environmental impact that could be attributed to the Project. There is no other factual evidence or alternative monitoring data that could refute these scientifically justified and documented findings provided by Ukraine regarding the environmental impacts of the Project.

The Danube-Black Sea Navigation Route supports two-way traffic, both day-time and night-time. At the present time, the sea access channel of the navigation route has a navigable draught of 5.85 m.

As a caring owner, Ukraine has taken a lot of responsibility for ensuring compliance with international environmental standards applicable to the inland navigation projects.

To this end and in line with the relevant international environmental conventions and treaties, especially Convention ESPOO Ukraine has completed all recommended procedures identified for this Project in the Ukrainian/Romanian Roadmap developed on October 2008, and undertaken an additional detailed assessment of transboundary environmental impacts associated with the Project.

The project has proved its efficiency. In particular, since the navigation renewal in the Danube – Black Sea Deep-Water Navigation Route in 2007 the quantity of the ship journeys increased considerably. The increase dynamics is positive: it became 47% more in the year 2008 compared with the year 2007; 13 % more in the year 2009 compared with in the year 2008; 8 % more in the year 2010 than compared with the year 2009.

As of 16<sup>th</sup> of March 2011 the quantity of ship journeys during the year 2011 made up 301.

The tendencies of transportations by the Danube – Black Sea Deep-Water Navigation Route is positive. In comparison with the previous years there were 53% cargoes more transported in the year 2008, 4% more – in the year 2009, and 43% more in the year 2010.

Let me emphasise that the issue of navigation should be also considered in the context of effective flood control measures. The magnitude and intensity of floods caused in the Danube Delta by global climate change are only expected to increase in the future, and they can be exacerbated even further by the large-scale flow management projects planned/implemented in the Danube Basin.

These projects will result in an increase of flood flow entering the Danube Delta, near the Reni Port where adjacent areas are likely to be flooded during the flooding events, to cause adverse impact to local ecosystems. In the context of these developments, it can be expected that flooding will be a serious problem in the Ukrainian part of the Danube Basin so long as the task of ensuring proper depths along the Ukrainian Kilia Branch in order to optimize its flow discharge pattern remains unresolved.

Furthermore, let me inform you that the first meeting of the Project for the Joint Environmental Monitoring, Assessment and Exchange of Information for Integrated Management of the Danube Delta Region was held in December 2010 in Odessa (Ukraine).

The Project is elaborated with the view to improve cross-border cooperation in the Danube Delta. Realization of this Project will promote the development of the Joint Danube Delta Sub-Basin Program (with the participation of Ukraine, Romania and Moldova) and will facilitate a harmonisation of the monitoring system in the Danube Delta.

To summarise the above, the development of environmentally friendly shipping infrastructure in the Ukrainian part of the Danube Delta aims to ensure safe inland navigation and environmental protection in line with the international requirements and standards, and improve socio-economic conditions for local communities. This will trigger the revival of a currently depressed region, which is home to 250,000 (two hundred fifty thousand) people; and will support cross-border cooperation among the neighbouring countries, both members and non-members of the EU, thus contributing to the development of the united Europe without borders and dividing lines.

Thank you for your attention!