

Danube Day 2011 in the Light of the Danube Strategy: Get active for the rivers!

VIENNA, 29 June (UN Information Service) – Danube Day 2011 will be celebrated on the 29th of June and calls on people of the 14 countries to get active in protecting water resources. This year, the annual Danube Day will receive a lot of attention, as it coincides with the adoption of the European Union (EU) Danube Strategy. This set of EU policies and initiatives will affect the lives of more than 100 million Europeans who live in the Danube catchment area and neighbouring regions. Ensuring high water quality is one of the strategy's priority areas – and has been at the focus of Danube Day celebrations since it was first held in 2004.

Danube Day events are coordinated by the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) which, together with the Coca-Cola Hellenic Group and The Coca-Cola Company, formed the 'Green Danube Partnership' to organize activities in association with national and local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), educational institutions and a variety of environmental groups and businesses. With an audience of 81 million people in 14 countries, it has become the world's largest river festival.

The Executive Secretary of the ICPDR Mr. Philip Weller said: "2011 is a special year, as the EU Danube Strategy has drawn a lot of interest to the Danube River Basin. Danube Strategy and Danube Day celebrations combined will bridge the will to getting active for the rivers on two levels: on the political level and the level of every individual person living in the Danube River Basin. The momentum we can see today will be lasting and benefit future Danube Days as well as other activities of the ICPDR."

In Ukraine, senior government representatives from Romania, Slovakia, Serbia and Hungary will travel high into the Carpathian Mountains. This is where the Tisza River, a major Danube tributary, originates. To commemorate the Integrated Tisza River Management Plan adopted in April, they will place stone plaques highlighting the significance of joint responsibilities in sustainable water management. Like many other Danube Day events, this initiative is supported by Coca-Cola Hellenic.

The Chairman of the Coca-Cola Hellenic Social Responsibility Committee Sir Michael Llewellyn-Smith said: "It is vitally important for commercial enterprises to promote the sustainable development of the cities and towns in the Danube countries. We support the protection of the environment for its own sake and because it helps us to operate successfully as a business."

Among planned activities in the Danube River Basin, people in cities, towns and villages will be invited to participate in a wide range of programmes including educational projects, exhibitions, concerts, workshops and roundtable discussions. A particular emphasis is placed on teaching and engaging members of the younger generation. The website Danube + will be launched at <http://danube.panda.org>, an interactive map-based platform which will expand understanding of the river and the challenges and opportunities it presents. Danube + is an initiative of WWF and The Coca-Cola Company Europe Group, supported by the ICPDR.

Long-running awareness-raising initiatives are continuing. The popular Danube Art Master school competition will again call on young people in each country to create artwork with a Danube theme. The Danube Box, an interactive teaching kit developed in Austria in 2006, has already been introduced in six countries, and is currently being introduced to Serbia.

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