

REFLECTIONS ON WATER

Sir Michael Llewellyn-Smith

Thanks to Dr. Stalzer, President of the ICPDR and also to Philip Weller, Executive Secretary for inviting me here today. This is the fourth occasion on which I have had the pleasure representing Coca-Cola Hellenic at an important event for the Danube river.

I have a story I would like to share with you. It's one I never get tired of telling.

To an audience of senior and experienced people from the worlds of Public Affairs, Business and the Environment I don't need to preach about the importance of Corporate Social Responsibility in business. I think it is now generally accepted.

So what I want to talk about this evening is specifically water, and why Coca-Cola Hellenic cares so much about water.

"No Water – No Business." is the story in short. But also, "no water, no life" – for human beings, and fish, animals, birds, plants, and trees.

For a bottling company water is a key ingredient in our softdrinks. We also use it in the operation of equipment and in cleansing processes at our bottling plants.

So we must ensure good, clean water supplies.

At the same time, water is vital to the health and livelihoods of all those in the communities we serve. If our consumers cannot have access to water, they cannot survive. Our business will then be doomed to fail.

The lesson is clear!

How do we implement these fine words?

First of all, year on year we have reduced the amount of water used in our operations.

Second, last year we achieved a longstanding goal of ensuring that 100% of all wastewater in the 28 countries in which we operate is treated to a level that supports aquatic life. Our 44th wastewater treatment plant was installed in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2011. I have visited such plants and seen the fish happily swimming.

Third, we make sure that all our employees understand the importance of water conservation. We encourage them to join-in efforts to clean up the rivers and their banks as volunteers.

We can only do so much on our own, so we also reached out to governments, NGOs and local communities in our efforts.

In 2005, we entered into the Green Danube Partnership – our flagship waterstewardship programme - with the ICPDR, and The Coca-Cola Company with the aim of raising public awareness about issues related to water, including pollution, degradation of supply areas, maintenance of wetlands and floodplains, and especially the need for cross-border cooperation.

It is a clear example of how a Public Private Partnership can achieve greater results than if two parties work independently. And we act as a catalyst in helping NGOs to access funding and support from larger international organizations and institutions such as UNDP and Unesco.

All the countries in the Danube watershed celebrated Danube Day on the 29th of June. It has become a massive celebration. Some 81 million people in 14 Danube countries are exhorted to ‘Get Active for the Rivers’. This is the largest river festival in the world! And it is a wonderful opportunity to engage teachers and young people in what we are doing through the famous ‘Danube Box’.

I would like to give you just a few highlights of what we in Coca-Cola Hellenic and our partners are doing in various countries.

- In Austria, for example, for the past 7 years we have held the Danube Challenge, a test of knowledge and skill for youngsters aged between 13 and 15 aimed at raising awareness about the importance of responsible water usage. This year, more than 27,000 took part.
- In Bosnia, we support events centred such as a Regatta on the Vrbas River, the largest tributary of the Danube.
- Celebrations in Bulgaria included essay contests - 'Drop by drop' - for everyone in the country including our own employees.
- In Croatia, we support the protection of the Sava River, the second largest tributary of the Danube, with city and town events and a long-term project to protect wetlands.
- This year, in the Czech Republic became the eighth country to have the Danube Box translated into its own language.
- In addition to its unique contest involving 'The Danube Box', Hungary presented educational tours for people at historic spots along the banks of the Danube.
- Romania this year has celebrated Danube Day with a conference about water and a large festival demonstrating the role played by the River in the country's culture.
- Serbia has done an enormous amount under the heading 'I love the Danube – Let's love it together' no less than 125 events in 28 towns and cities.
- Citizens of Slovakia were invited to take part in river tours and attend exhibitions.
- A nation-wide essay contest for schoolchildren in Slovenia created a high level of awareness about water protection measures; and
- In Ukraine, a range of events included a festival of kits, restocking of the river Tisza and a regatta.

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is my story.

It is, however, one without an ending.

A happy ending will depend not just on the ICPDR and the Green Danube Partnership, but also on the support of the Business Friends of the Danube.

Coca-Cola Hellenic is of course a member along with others – The Coca-Cola Company, Borealis, General Electrics Romania and ORF alongside the ICPDR.

I want to stress to you all on the basis of our experience, that a commitment to join the Business Friends does not necessarily involve a major commitment of funds. A company can help with advice, technical support, marketing and training skills and employee volunteers.

So, if your company is considering membership, I do strongly urge you to take the plunge. It can really make a difference.

I know that in difficult economic times, such as those of today, companies have to bear down on expenditure. But our experience has been that maintaining our Corporate Social Responsibility programmes is just as important to the health of our business now as it ever was. It is a crucial part of ensuring the sustainability of our business.

And Sustainability should be the aim of all of us here tonight.

Thank you!

1,038 words