

Convention on Co-operation for the Protection  
and Sustainable Use of the Danube River

Ministerial Meeting  
of the International Commission  
for the Protection of the Danube River

Vienna, 13 December 2004

**The Danube Basin – Rivers in the Heart of Europe**  
(Danube Declaration)

- *Ten years after the signing of the Convention for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River (Danube River Protection Convention - DRPC) in Sofia establishing the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River ( ICPDR);*
- *in the year of the accession to the European Union of four Danubian States (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia) and the further enlargement process bringing the Danube back into the heart of Europe;*
- *aware of the great historical, economic, environmental, and cultural significance of the Danube River and its tributaries;*
- *bearing in mind that the success of our co-operation is providing an example and encouraging states in the wider international arena;*

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

### **Our ICPDR - A Catalyst for Co-operation**

**(1) affirm:**

- i) our belief that the ICPDR is the principal international body promoting the sustainable and balanced use of the water resources in the Danube basin. Through its efforts the ICPDR strengthens co-operation and develops mutual understanding between the countries of the region thereby reducing the likelihood of conflicts. We commit ourselves to providing the appropriate funding for the ICPDR to continue its work;

- ii) that basin-wide co-ordination has been supplemented and strengthened through sub-basin initiatives such as in the Sava and Tisza basin and call upon the governments of countries sharing other important sub-basins to consider initiation of similar processes fostering cooperation;
- iii) the importance of the regional co-operation under the DRPC as providing a positive and encouraging example of good neighbourhood relations for the wider Danube-Black Sea region and other basins.

### **Our Partners**

#### **(2) record our appreciation and thanks to:**

- i) the donors and international financial institutions for their essential contribution towards achieving our aims;
- ii) the UNDP-GEF Danube Regional Project for financially supporting a large number of the initiatives which have been undertaken;
- iii) the Commission for the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (BSC) and the joint work to achieve the common goals agreed to in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between our two commissions;
- iv) the Danube Black Sea (DABLAS) Taskforce for promoting sustainable development in the region;
- v) the official Observers<sup>1</sup> to the work of the ICPDR for their knowledge, commitment and support;

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<sup>1</sup> Danube Commission (DC), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), International Association for Danube Research (IAD), Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (RAMSAR), Danube Environmental Forum (DEF), Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), The Commission for the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (BSC), Global Water Partnership for Central and Eastern Europe (GWP-CEE), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - International Hydrological Programme (UNESCO-IHP), International Association for Water Works in the Danube Basin (IAWD)

and encourage further strengthening of the co-operation of the ICPDR with bodies of relevant regional and sub-basin agreements and initiatives and we express our confidence that these and other partners will continue to work with us towards our common aims.

### **Our Achievements**

**(3) recognize that – within the first ten years of cooperation - we have achieved significant progress in our joint efforts to manage this shared river system, including:**

- the development and implementation of a five-year Joint Action Programme that includes major commitments for reductions in pollution to the waters in the Danube River Basin;
- the agreement to implement the EU Water Framework Directive throughout the Danube basin;
- the establishment of a Trans-National Monitoring Network (TNMN) to evaluate the water quality of the Danube;
- the establishment of an Accident Emergency Warning System;
- the elaboration of the Danube Basin Analysis (Roof Report 2004), adopted by us today;
- the development of the Action Programme for Sustainable Flood Protection in the Danube River Basin, adopted by us today.

**(4) note with satisfaction that these actions have resulted in:**

- a considerable reduction of pollution from municipalities and industry;
- a reduction of the pollution originating from agriculture;
- a significant reduction of nutrient levels entering the Black Sea;
- an improvement in the water quality classification throughout much of the Danube basin.

## Our Concerns

**(5) note, that despite these achievements there are still a significant number of concerns and in particular that:**

- i) nutrient pollution, and the eutrophication problems this gives rise to, continues to be a major challenge;
- ii) hazardous substances such as some heavy metals and pesticides are present in various parts of the basin in concentrations and amounts which constitute a risk for the aquatic environment and human health;
- iii) especially in the middle and lower parts of the Danube, where financial resources are more limited, there are still a large number of untreated municipal and industrial wastewater discharges entering the river system;
- iv) the existence of a large number of risk sites together with insufficient and/or inadequate prevention and response measures means there is a real risk of significant contamination by dangerous substances;
- v) as economic activity in the lower and middle reaches of the basin picks up there is a danger that the amounts of hazardous substances and nutrients entering the river system may increase;
- vi) many years of dredging, channel realignment, shipping activity, dam building, hydroelectric schemes, inappropriate flood protection measures and other infrastructure projects have led to a degradation of riverine and flood plain ecosystems, a significant loss of biodiversity and had an enormous impact on the groundwater recharging system and the flood retention capacities of the Danube and some of its tributaries;

- vii) future infrastructure projects (transport, energy, flood protection) may further deteriorate the ecosystem if the needs of the aquatic environment and other water uses are not carefully assessed and integrated in the planning process;
- viii) the frequency of extreme climatic events such as floods and droughts may increase as a result of global warming and, in combination with unsustainable human practices, this may cause substantial economic, social and environmental damage;
- ix) new challenges such as the introduction of invasive species and the intensification of aquaculture which may have significant effects upon the Danube ecosystem.

### **Our Goals and Objectives**

**(6) agree that in the coming years we aspire to achieve the following goals and objectives, taking into account the sometimes more ambitious commitments already made by other countries at the national or EU level:**

- i) to implement the EU Water Framework Directive, including the development of a co-ordinated River Basin Management Plan for the Danube Basin by 2009 (see annex for more detailed actions);
- ii) to reduce further the risks from floods within the Danube basin through the implementation of the Action Programme for Sustainable Flood Protection (see annex for more detailed actions) and taking full account of the principles set out in the communication from the European Commission on flood-risk management, flood prevention, protection and mitigation;

- iii) to reduce the total amount of nutrients entering the Danube and its tributaries to levels consistent with the achievement of good ecological status in the Danube river and to contribute to the restoration of an environmentally sustainable nutrient balance in the Black Sea;
- iv) to stop, by 2015 at the latest, all discharges of untreated wastewater from towns with more than 10,000 inhabitants and from all major industrial installations and to increase the efficiency and level of treatment thereafter;
- v) to phase out entirely the discharge of those substances which we identify as constituting the highest risk to the aquatic ecosystems in the Danube basin and to reduce significantly the discharge of other pollutants;
- vi) to reverse the trend of the physical degradation of aquatic ecosystems by returning sections of the Danube and its tributaries to a more natural state inter alia by restoring floodplains, reconnecting wetlands and retention areas and by further efforts to reduce the physical impact of new projects;
- vii) to protect, conserve and restore the biodiversity and diverse habitats of the water dependent ecosystems, in particular wetlands and floodplains, in the Danube basin with particular attention being given to rare and endangered species and the unique ecosystem of the Danube delta;
- viii) to improve monitoring systems and the availability of data, in particular in relation to the assessment of trans-boundary impacts;
- ix) to promote the active participation of all stakeholders in the protection of the Danube basin and in particular the general public and NGOs and as part of this vocation to foster and encourage a greater awareness of the environmental issues affecting the river basin including an annual celebration on 29th June each year of "Danube Day";

- x) to promote and facilitate information exchange and transparency with regard to the possible trans-boundary impact of projects, plans and programmes affecting the aquatic ecosystem and thereby also contributing to commitments under the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention);
- xi) to ensure that the development of the agricultural sector in the Danube basin does not lead to a degradation in the environmental quality of the river and its tributaries and in this context, to avoid counter-productive subsidies and where applicable to use the instruments of the new EU Common Agricultural Policy ;
- xii) to promote the integration of regional priorities into national programmes and facilitate the co-ordinated and efficient use of funding instruments at national, EU and international level in particular by providing a comprehensive and integrated vision of the priorities for environmental investments directed towards protection of the aquatic environment;
- xiii) to take all reasonable measures to prevent industrial accidents resulting in dangerous substances being released into surface or groundwater, to improve the Danube Accident Emergency Warning System and in particular to strengthen further the synergies with regional and national systems;
- xiv) to develop further and to harmonise the basin-wide information and data systems including data from the Transnational Monitoring Network (TNMN), the Emission Inventory, and to establish a Danube Geographical Information System (GIS);
- xv) to carry out, in 2005, a review of the operational structures of the ICPDR and the existing pattern of resource allocations and based on the results of this review to implement the appropriate changes.

## **Annex**

**In addition to the commitments specified in the main body of the declaration the following, more detailed actions will also be carried out:**

### **with regard to the further implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive:**

- the preparation of a co-ordinated
- Danube River Basin Management Plan by 2009 entailing agreed joint measures and setting the framework for more detailed plans at the sub-basin or national level;
- the development by 2006 in selected, major tributaries, of a sub basin approach which will complement the comprehensive and integrating efforts at the level of the entire basin;
- to improve by 2008 the characterization and analysis of Danube basin waters to ensure a better and reliable basis for the preparation, in 2009, of the River Basin Management Plan and associated programme of measures;
- to carry out a second Joint Danube Survey in 2007 (possibly including the navigable stretches of major tributaries) and using this survey as part of a Danube intercalibration exercise;
- to transform, by the end of 2006, the TNMN into a network compatible with the EU Water Framework Directive.

### **in relation to the implementation of the Action Programme for Sustainable Flood Protection in the Danube River Basin:**

- to improve flood forecasting and early warning systems and to develop the inter-linkages between national and regional systems;
- to prepare flood action programmes for sub-basins;
- to create fora for the exchange of expert knowledge and the sharing of experiences;
- to assess flood-prone areas and to evaluate flood risks – aiming inter alia at developing flood risk maps – as a tool for planning and communication, based on a recommendation to be elaborated as soon as possible by the ICPCR;
- to develop a checklist for safety requirements for contaminated sites in flood-risk areas.