

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends!

It is my great pleasure to address you on the occasion of two events of great significance for the Danube Basin: the 3rd Annual Forum of the EUSDR, as well as the 20th anniversary of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR).



In the past 20 years, the ICPDR has grown into the single most important platform to unite and orchestrate the efforts of 14 Danube Basin countries and the European Union in managing water and making the Danube a healthier river basin for everyone to enjoy.

Together, we work on measures to increase biodiversity, reduce pollution and provide clean water, reconnect flood plains and wetlands, and we facilitate the sustainable development of navigation, agriculture and hydropower. The importance of our work is highlighted by the tragic flood events we see these days in the Balkans. This work is, however, an ongoing and long-term effort guided by a legal framework and political mandate.

The Danube River Protection Convention, which established the ICPDR, was signed in my native city of Sofia on 29 June 1994. More recently, the Ministers of our member countries responsible for water have made the ICPDR the body that officially coordinates the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the EU Floods Directive (EFD) in the Danube River Basin.

This includes some territories in countries that are not members of the EU, specifically in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Ukraine and Moldova. The countries of the Danube River Basin have thereby also developed the ICPDR into a tool to foster integration in the region.

The work of the ICPDR is based on expert groups composed of national civil servants and delegates from observer organisations. These expert groups ensure that the ICPDR activities remain firmly anchored in the national administration. They also helped to develop valuable pools of national experts who used the ICPDR to build capacity and share information, and guarantee a strong sense of ownership among ICPDR members with regards to the commission.

The ICPDR is currently preparing the 2nd Danube River Basin Management Plan and 1st Flood Risk Management Plan. Both documents are developed in line with provisions of WFD or EFD and will be available as drafts by the end of the year. These management plans will be further milestones for the ICPDR and lead our way into the third decade of delivering actions.

Products like these have made the ICPDR one of the most regarded transboundary organisations in water management world-wide. We are happy to see that recent developments such as the EUSDR relate to this. We are looking forward to continue to support the EUSDR with our experience and ongoing endeavours in water management.

With my best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Atanas Kostadinov'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Atanas Kostadinov, ICPDR President 2014
Deputy Minister for the Environment and Water, Bulgaria

