



Draft Proceedings of the 5th Meeting on the Follow-up of the Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River Basin

Zagreb, February 4-5, 2014

INTRODUCTION

Background

The ICPDR (International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River), the ISRBC (International Sava River Basin Commission) and the DC (Danube Commission) have jointly launched the process to develop the *Joint Statement (JS) on Guiding Principles on the Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection in the Danube River Basin (Joint Statement)*. After a year-long process preparing the document, and its adoption by the three river commissions in December 2007 and January 2008, the Joint Statement was publicly announced in March 2008. In accordance with the Joint Statement, the ICPDR, the Danube Commission, and the International Sava River Basin Commission, including relevant stakeholders, shall meet yearly to discuss specific navigational and environmental developments and to highlight good practices in river maintenance projects. The fifth meeting was held on February 4-5, 2014 in Zagreb in Panorama Hotel

Organization and objectives

The meeting was organized by ISRBC together with the ICPDR and the Danube Commission.

The objectives of the meeting were to:

- inform about the progress on the implementation of the *Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River Basin*,
- discuss the further development and application of the *Joint Statement* and its implications (regular information exchange),
- inform and discuss new facts and perspectives of European inland waterway transport,
- inform about the state of IWT projects in the Danube basin.

PROTOCOL

Day 1 (February 4, 2014)

Welcome and introductory statements about the Joint Statement

(Chaired by Mr. Dejan Komatina – Secretary of the ISRBC)

The Meeting was opened by welcome speeches made by Mr. Dejan Komatina, Secretary of the ISRBC, Mr. Ivan Zavadsky, Executive Secretary of the ICPDR and Mr. Petar Margić, Director General of the Danube Commission. They welcomed all participants on behalf of the three commissions, informed about the progress made in the implementation of the JS and expressed the commitment to the principles of the JS.

Mr. Komatina particularly informed about the outline of the meeting and the agenda as well as about the speakers that could not come.

Mr. Margić, among others, provided the interesting information that the number of passengers in inland navigation on the Danube has never been so high, pointing out that 1 150 000 passengers were reported in the last year.

Mr. Zavadsky expressed strong commitment of the ICPDR to the implementation of JS, as well as keeping JS as an integral part of ICPDR agenda, particularly in the preparation of the 2nd DRBM Plan.

Session 1: Inland navigation and Environment – Policy developments relevant for the Danube region

(Chaired by Mr. Dejan Komatina)

On behalf of European Commission DG Move **Mr. Cesare Bernabei** presented latest developments in EU Policies on inland navigation, specifically key elements of the new TEN-T policy which, such as dual layer approach, were based on an objective methodology - **Core and Comprehensive network** with deadlines for network achievement that are to be carried out in line with new legislation [*Regulation \(EU\) No 1315/2013*](#). He emphasized that Comprehensive network was to ensure accessibility to all regions, while Core network focused on strategically most important parts.

He also presented the implementation tools, as well as Coordinators and Core Network Corridors, stressing that 9 Core Network Corridors were to be defined in Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) until 2020, presuming flexible governance structures and involvement of stakeholder. All the same he provided the information about the CEF budget with the share allotted to the transport that is to be transferred from Cohesion Fund. Furthermore he introduced financial instruments, clarifying limited eligibility of grants under CEF and full eligibility for financial instruments.

While presenting Complementarity between the CEF and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), he specified the rules and procedures for selection of projects, particularly specific provisions echoing the rules of Cohesion Policy.

Mr. Raimund Mair from ICPDR presented **Information on the input provided for the meeting by European Commission DG Environment**. He emphasized:

- A Letter by Mr. Peter Gammeltoft to ISRBC and ICPDR in which he expressed and reiterated support to the Joint Statement approach and process, and made reference to other documents like

the CIS Policy Paper from 2006 and the Platina Manual, providing an effective framework to deliver benefits for ecology and economic development,

- Guidelines „Inland waterway transport and Natura 2000“ were published in December 2012 (http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/IWT_BHD_Guidelines.pdf) as a useful tool to increase understanding between investors, planners, decision-makers and nature conservation promoters that incorporated holistic approach to inland waterway transport and nature protection.

Session 2: Inland navigation and Environment – Policy developments relevant for the Danube region

(Chaired by Mr. Dejan Komatina)

Mr. Željko Milković from the ISRBC provided information on the reporting sheets for the individual navigation projects which were developed and sent out for feedback before the meeting. Feedback was provided prior to the meeting for the projects in Croatia, Slovakia and Austria. The project sheets were further proposed to be put on the websites of the three Commissions.

Mr. Komatina informed that 12 projects were reported via the reporting sheets, what is a step forward because it allows to obtain information before the meeting, even though not for all projects reporting sheets were provided.

Mr. Schwaiger from Austria made reference to the WFD River Basin Management Plans and the issue of reporting navigation projects.

Mr. Bernabei expressed appreciation for the value of collecting information on the different projects and informed about the good cooperation between different DG's within the European Commission on inland navigation. As an example he referred to a meeting between DG MOVE, DG REGIO and DG ENV on the Danube 1 navigation project following a workshop in Bucharest in autumn 2013, whereas DG ENV will nominate an expert to provide advice on the monitoring which is undertaken in the frame of the project.

Mr. Robert Tögel from Via Donau gave an update of the **Integrated River Engineering Project on the Danube to the East of Vienna** that was to be realized as a priority project of the European Commission (Trans-European Transport Network, Rhine-Danube-Corridor). With this project Via Donau is fulfilling the statutory mandate to provide for better environmental and navigational conditions.

Pilot projects that were realized within the framework of this project represent good examples of good practice for integrated planning approaches defined in the JS. They specifically contributed to:

- River bed stability
- Improved ecological conditions
- Improved nautical conditions

Those improvements were realized through following measures that were applied:

- Granulometric river bed stabilization
- Optimization of groins
- River bank restoration
- Reconnection of side arms

Furthermore, Mr. Tögel emphasized the significance of Stakeholder Forum meetings (9 of them held so far), as an excellent method to integrate stakeholders into a project, as well as depicting the monitoring, required by the authorities, as necessary to gain experience.

Finally, he presented the situation after the flood from June 2013 that caused great damages and as a consequence the funds necessary for the completion of the pilot project "Bad Deutsch Altenburg" will require additional 4.5 mil €

Ms. Lidija Hubalek from Agency for Inland Waterways, Vukovar presented Active projects on inland waterways in Croatia. She informed that the projects were launched before EU accession of Croatia and the adoption of the Joint Statement, but the Joint Statement principles are planned to be applied in future projects.

As to the Danube section in Croatia that is shared with Serbia (137 km), there are 17 critical sectors according to the DC's Recommendations on minimum requirements for standard fairway parameters with preliminary costs for the rehabilitation of the most critical sectors.

With regard to the rehabilitation and improvement of the Sava River waterway the preparation of the main design for the section Sisak-Račinovci started on May 16, 2013, while the estimated value of works will amount to 50 mil €.

Mr. Ivan Mitrović from PLOVPUT, Belgrade presented Involvement of public and transparency of the planning process in IWW's infrastructure projects in Serbia with the application of JS principles in such as:

- supporting a dynamic equilibrium and adequate connectivity conditions, thus adopting preservation of connectivity conditions,
- undisturbed longitudinal and lateral migration of all fish species and other water-related species to ensure their natural and self-sustaining development, thus adopting detached structures as preferred ones,
- balanced sediment budget, with adopted design approach which presumes sediment equilibrium,
- Establishment of interdisciplinary planning teams involving key stakeholders which lead to the setup of Stakeholders Forum,
- Insurance of the comparability of alternatives, thus presuming Multi-Criteria Analysis with elaboration of navigation and environmental issues, along with the technical feasibility and costs,
- Avoidance or minimization of the impacts of structural/hydraulic engineering intervention. For that purpose for each of 6 critical sectors (downstream from the border with Croatia) were provided at least 5 conceptual alternatives, with 35 simulations developed for conceptual alternatives.

(Chaired by Mr. Petar Margić)

Ms. Catalina Dumbrava on behalf of Romanian AFDJ and Ministry of Transport presented Improvement of the navigation conditions on the Danube between Calarasi and Braila. This project is particularly important for the safe navigation from the upper Danube to the Black Sea in Constanta Port. There were identified 10 critical sections where during the dry season the minimum depths are reduced down to 1.40 m. 3 of these 10 critical points were considered first priority where hidrotechnical works are urgently needed: Bala Branch, Epurasu Island and Caleia Branch.

For this purpose the Contractor has drawn up a detailed work schedule with completion planned for April 2014 and avoiding disturbance during the critical fish migration periods, i.e. avoiding the work in the main fairway during the months of March-June and September-October

As to the monitoring of environmental impact of the works, the full transparency of the activities was ensured and in order to involve the key stakeholders in the process of implementing the project. So, there were organized periodical meetings with the experts, as well as workshops (3 so far: in June 2012, February 2013, July 2013 and October 2013) with all stakeholders in order to present the status of the works and the results of the monitoring team.

Since the results of a 3D modelling raised some question marks concerning water flow velocities at some sections, AFDJ decided to restructure the project and find a proper solution in order to ensure the sturgeon migration at Bala Branch and increase of the water flow and the depth in the Old Danube for improvement of navigation conditions. So, AFDJ will launch a tender for the study to identify the best technical alternative solutions, which together with the works already executed will achieve a balance between navigation objectives, proper mitigation measures related to technical solutions and environmental needs.

Ms. Iustina Popescu from INCDPM, Romania gave a presentation on monitoring the environmental impact of the works regarding the improvement of the navigation conditions on the Danube River between Calarasi and Braila, km 375 and km 175.

The specific objective of the project is to ensure the effective monitoring of environmental factors, especially sturgeons migration routes and accomplishing numeric simulation for different hydrodynamic scenarios for ensuring the possibility of implementing preventing solution.

Following the research performed, it turned out that there were not identified problems caused by the impact of hydrotechnical works on sturgeons' migration at the explored sector, but it was necessary to continue monitoring of sturgeons' behavior and migration routes for increasing the confidence level and ensuring preventive solutions, if case.

Ms. Cristina Cuc from Romanian Ministry of Transport provided the presentation related to navigation conditions on the Romanian – Bulgarian common section of the Danube. In the period 2007 – 2011 Feasibility study and EIA study were completed while in the previous year (2013) it was performed analysis of existing studies , along with the definition of ToR for Gap filling which is planned to be finished by 2016, while the execution of works is planned in the period 2016 – 2020.

By implementing JS principles it will assure the proper and transparent preparation and implementation of the Project based on the multidisciplinary dialog for improvement of the quality of the Project, as well as the exchange of information of importance to the Project. It will also assure proper and timely coordination and enable wide input and involvement of parties which have an interest/could bring added value to the Project.

Mr. Željko Milković presented the Implementation of the JS Guiding Principles into the Development of the Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection on the Sava River. First, he gave a brief description of the recent history on the Sava River, including significant bulk of transport volume that was shipped 30 years ago, which was severely reduced due to long periods of very deficient maintenance.

With regard to ongoing projects for rehabilitation of the navigation on the Sava, it was launched a project for the sector Brčko (rkm 234) – Sisak (rkm 594) in May 2016 when the contract for the preparation of the detailed design and all necessary documentation for the works was signed. Considering the analysis of the existing documentation and the consultation with environmental stakeholders, the consultant proposed increasing the scope of work, as well as the extension of time for the completion of the Project, so it is currently suspended, waiting for the final agreement on amendments to the contract.

As to the sector Brčko (234) – Belgrade (0), EIA was supposed to be completed by the end of 2013, but the deadline for the preparation was extended by 1.5 years, mainly because of the delay in the preparation of the detailed design documentation, which is necessary to produce high-quality environmental impact assessment study.

Considering the Joint Statement implementation, ISRBC setup Steering Committee for Monitoring and Coordination of the Implementation of the Project Rehabilitation and Development of Traffic and Navigation on the Sava River Waterway. It was established through ISRBC Decisions 7/11 and 11/12 with the aim of coordinating activities in the framework of rehabilitation and development of transport and navigation on the Sava River waterway. Among others, it consists of the representatives of regional/national NGO community, thus emphasizing the importance of intensive involvement of all stakeholders in the development of relevant project parts.

However, still there is no clear mechanism and criteria for reporting on the implementation and for monitoring of implementation of the Joint Statement, so that sometimes can lead to **arbitrary and subjective interpretation** of the application of the principles and criteria of the Joint Statement which can cause **unnecessary difficulties** in project implementation. Therefore, ISRBC together with ICPDR and DC will work on improvement of the Joint Statement on the basis of achieved

experience.

Following the presentations, Mr. Neven Trenc from the Croatian State Institute for Nature Protection asked for clarification regarding the Croatian navigation projects and whether Natura 2000 legislation is addressed. Croatian representatives clarified that an EIA is in place which was challenged in court. Therefore, currently an updated EIA study is under preparation addressing the complaints.

Mr. Karl Schwaiger from Austria expressed appreciation for the presentations on the different projects and asked whether the Joint Statement approach led to an improvement in the quality of the projects. Mr. Robert Tögel from Via Donau explained that the project East of Vienna was already prepared when the Joint Statement was adopted, therefore the Joint Statement principles could not be taken on board from the beginning. However, the stakeholder workshops which were conducted are perceived as positive for sharing experiences. Suggestions were brought in and small adaptations were made, improving the quality of the project. Following, due to the time constraints the chairperson proposed to proceed in the agenda with the next items.

Session 3: Observation from stakeholders and observers

(Chaired by Mr. Petar Margić)

Mr. Manfred Seitz from Pro Danube International pointed out 2 realities in the Danube waterway policy in his presentation "Sustainable and efficient transport on the Danube – viewpoints from an industry association": political support and political failure in some states in terms of declared effective waterway infrastructure maintenance on the Danube vs performed works that should have been executed immediately during the low water periods, which resulted in reduced efficiency of transport operations, loss of customers, shutdown of barging companies; risk of total blockage of transport chains and millions of Euros in financial losses for barging- and port-operators.

He stressed that the Danube is not a shallow river, all we need is proper infrastructure maintenance. Low water periods cannot be avoided but safe and cost-efficient transport can be ensured if all Danube states respect the existing international regulations.

In order to solve the situation, PDI proposes "EC led task force" involving political level and stakeholders from private and public sector, ensuring: short and mid-term action plans for improvement of fairway maintenance to be elaborated and agreed on a binding level with commitments for 2014, followed by transnational maintenance strategy with binding implementation roadmap. To that end PDI and Pro Danube Austria are planning to organize "Policy meets Industry Event" on 24 June 2014 in Vienna

Mr. Georg Rast from WWF presented Lessons learned on procedural and technical aspects from Joint Statement process and recommendations for the way forward – WWF point of view. He presented experiences from different countries and emphasized general delay in collection of the data and no sufficient mutual trust among the parties.

He particularly pointed out that:

- Data basis are often critical (poor), i.e. that long term monitoring records are essential for morphology and biota,
- Even sophisticated modelling does not grant safe output on effects by structural interventions,
- Stepwise approach and adaptive management suggested instead of complete training of a river section at once,
- Long term effects are still overlooked,
- Functionality of structures will change with riverbed incision and with flow reduction and/or altered sediment balance by climate change.

For the way forward he provided several recommendations, such as:

- Establishment of participatory body when project design is developed with careful selection of forum members and responsibilities, with Regular meetings, limited overall timeframe followed by provision of the data that would be transparent, understandable for forum members (and legal institutions),
- Appropriate modelling based on long term records (decades) with secure independent check, serious options assessment (MCA and its criteria), providing river managers with deep regional expertise a strong stake in decision making,
- EIA is to be finished with final design and within forum process (proper scoping, cumulative effects considered, independent expert review, appropriate public hearing. EIA for EU-funded projects should be under special supervision (Jaspers), highest level of professionalism, comparability over all Danube river projects even if more demanding than national legislation.

Following the presentation, Ms. Cristina Cuc from Romania expressed her disappointment regarding the presentation from WWF because the statements on the RO projects were mainly referring to the issue of Braila - Calarasi. Furthermore the proposal to carefully select forum members and independent checks as proposed by WWF was questioned because it is not clear who should take such a decision and on which basis. Mr. Rast from WWF confirmed that he was mainly referring to Braila – Calarasi in his statements on the Romanian projects. Regarding the selection of forum members he proposed to invest more time in asking for participation at national level. Furthermore it should be clearer communicated what the involvement in a forum means in terms of the required resources.

At the end of the first day, in the discussion that followed, several conclusions were made:

1. It was stressed that the input of the EC (DG Move, DG ENV) is considered as valuable.
2. Notable progress in reporting of the projects has been achieved such as:
 - Submission of the project data sheets prior to the meeting,
 - Presentation of the projects referring to the JS principles.
3. Assuming that the submission of Project Data Sheets will become a practice, a reduction of presentation's time has to be considered. Thus more time for discussion could be acquired, as well as an increased efficiency of the overall meeting.
4. Several interesting inputs were provided within Session 3, offering topics to be discussed and dealt with in future. For example. Mr. Karl Schwaiger posed the question if the JS led to better solutions in projects.
5. It was also remarked that it would be nice to see project presentations and environmental NGOs referring to JS principles, not beyond them.

Day 2 (February 5, 2014)

Session 4: Current state of other IWT projects and related developments relevant for the Danube region

(Chaired by Mr. Ivan Zavadsky)

Mr. Tibor Parrag from Duna-Drava National Park and **Mr. Thomas Hartl** from Via Donau jointly gave the presentation on NEWADA duo and DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0 - Joint activities towards integrated solutions.

While referring to the NEWADA project they noted that it was just about the waterway maintenance, while JS just touched this topic since it focused on engineering processes.

With regard to navigation aspects of DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0, they stressed that WP5 dealt with river morphology, sediment management, river restoration, monitoring, while results of river restoration projects within the framework of DANUBEPARKS 1 were published in Strategy on Conservation and Navigation.

In terms of previous cooperation, it was held Cross-sectoral conference on nature protection and navigation (16-17 / 10 / 2013, Hainburg, Austria) which covered topics such as:

- identifying conflicts / possible solutions in workshops
- knowledge exchange
- joint field trip to restoration site

Follow-up project is embodied in **WILDisland** initiative dealing with: small islands (gravel or sand) as the key habitats of Danube ecological corridor, representation of the present river/floodplain dynamics, natural flora and fauna – wilderness of Danube. Future steps of the initiative will focus on following:

- Changing number of islands/areas – regular update needed,
- Concept / follow-up project to add more islands in a second step,
- Joint evaluation of waterway administrations & protected areas,
- Implementation

Mr. Andreas Bäck from Via Donau gave a presentation on PLATINA II Platform for the implementation of NAIADES II, which also provided technical and organisational support for policy actions to the European Commission, integrated relevant stakeholder groups and promoted sustainable inland waterway transport in Europe.

Project will last from 1.9.2013 to 29.2.2016 with EU contribution of 1.999,995 Mio. EUR. The Consortium will include 12 partners from 7 countries, while the thematic areas will cover Markets & Awareness, Innovation & Fleet, Jobs & Skills and Infrastructure

Mr. Gert-Jan Muilerman from Via Donau gave a presentation on CO-WANDA Convention for Ship Waste Management on the Danube stressing that the whole project applied mainly to the management of oily and greasy ship wastes generated on ships.

The whole conspet of the project is divided into the legal framework for the ship waste management that is to be developed and technical solutions for waste disposal with a model for refinancing of the costs. The main activities are

- Advancement of running ship waste management systems,
- Waste prevention & Handling onboard, Network of Reception Facilities, Financing Model, River Information Services,
- Implementation of practical tests and pilot activities,
- Development of an International Danube Ship Waste Convention

The project started in October 2013 and is to be completed in Septemeber 2014. It includes 12 partners with the budget of 1.8 mio EUR.

Mr. Raimund Mair from ICPDR presented **Next steps in the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive in the Danube basin.**

First, he drew attention to the **Danube River Protection Convention** as the overall legal instrument for co-operation on transboundary water management in the Danube River Basin, with its objectives (protection of water and ecological resources, sustainable use of water, reduction of nutrients and hazardous substances and management of floods and ice hazards) and as the main instrument - WFD River Basin Management Planning that is based on three levels of coordination (roof level, sub basin/national level and sub-unit level).

While refering to the 1st Danube River Basin Management Plan completed in 2009, he stressed that

approx. 50% of the Danube and its tributaries are not in good ecological status/potential and pointed out measures needed for achieving WFD objectives taking into account significant water management issues (SWMIs), as well as hydromorphological alterations.

With regard to WFD implementation steps, especially in a view of the 6-years planning cycle, certain steps towards 2nd DRBM Plan have been made. In December 2014: Draft 2nd DRBM Plan will be available, finalization and adoption are expected in December 2015 that will be followed by implementation of Programme of measures.

2nd DRBM Plan will provide opportunities for strengthening application of Joint Statement in the fields of integrate planning, project reporting, measures hydromorphological improvements and public consultation. Joint Statement will remain to be of key relevance, while potentials for securing and improving practical application are still to be utilized on a larger scale.

Following the presentations, Mr. Schwaiger from Austria pointed out that restoration measures for past projects can be costly for meeting today's standards set by environmental legislation. It would therefore be crucial to ensure the sustainability of ongoing and new projects from the beginning. In this regard the Joint Statement process has to deliver results. The process is encouraging but can and should be improved. Furthermore, he proposed that the Joint Statement process should be properly reflected in the 2nd Danube River Basin Management Plan by including a comprehensive list of navigation infrastructure projects. Finally, he pointed out that the topic of the lack of maintenance for improving the conditions for navigation seems to be a blind spot which could be an additional focus of the discussions in the future.

Mr. Gerhard Nagl from the Danube Environmental Forum (DEF) stressed the need for the assessment of the different projects on biodiversity.

Mr. Cesare Bernabei from the European Commission reiterated the importance of the Joint Statement process, whereas further work is needed to reach an optimum. He further stressed the importance of inter-sectoral cooperation, whereas funding programs should correlated between different policies. With regard to the EUSDR, he expressed support for PA1a and PA6 in exploring possibilities for an improved application of the Joint Statement and helping institutions and stakeholders to understand the legal issues. Finally, Mr. Bernabei mentioned that too strict conditions for inland navigation are expected to have an impact on the environment in a broader sense.

Mr. Seitz from Pro Danube informed about the reduction of cargo transport in the last years and that a significant amount of the budget for the project East of Vienna is spent on environmental measures, whereas environmental measures should be financed from the environmental budget and not the navigation budget. In case no progress is made, this would lead to a loose – loose situation for both, inland navigation and the environment.

Session 5: Potential role of the EU Danube Strategy for improving the implementation of the Joint Statement

In this session Mr. Florian Ballnus and Mr. Gert-Jan Muilerman gave a joint presentation on EU Strategy for the Danube Region and Joint Statement, particularly EUSDR Priority Area 1a and Priority Area 6, i.e. on their cooperation, since they are focused on implementation of the Joint Statement principles and a higher acceptance and faster realization of the projects.

They presented concrete proposal for supporting activities of PAC 1a and PAC 6 such as:

- Proposal to meet for an informal brainstorming session on the future of the Joint Statement process, involving DG-MOVE, DG-Environment, DG-REGIO, Danube Commission, Sava Commission, ICPDR, PAC1a, PAC6, NGOs and industry representatives,
- Purpose of the meeting shall be to discuss and develop concrete activities based on the needs of the involved actors, facilitated by EUSDR / PACs,
- Screening possibilities for future financing for these activities.

The outcomes of the related discussions are planned to be communicated to the group.

Mr. Rast from WWF expressed his expectation that EUSDR support from PA1a and PA6 will create an added value since both, navigation and environment are represented.

Mr. Trenc from the Croatian State Institute for Nature Protection proposed that experts working on Natura 2000 and biodiversity issues should be part of the informal brainstorming session. Mr. Schwaiger from Austria expressed his trust in the ICPDR Secretariat participating in the informal brainstorming session as proposed by PAC1a and PAC6. The EUSDR could e.g. provide support in the exchange of experiences on measures if possible, next to providing a 3rd opinion in case of conflicting discussions.

Mr. Zavadsky from the ICPDR welcomed and expressed support for the approach presented by PAC1a and PAC6. A stock-taking exercise would be considered as useful in order to assess the needs for an improved application of the Joint Statement, whereas exchange of experiences on technical solutions and participative processes could be relevant topics for EUSDR support. Setting up a facility which is transparent and technically based could help to speed up the process of the implementation of sustainable projects, including e.g. a catalogue of good practices. Including the navigation infrastructure projects in the 2nd DRBM Plan would allow to strengthen the Joint Statement process by creating more transparency.

Mr. Rast from WWF expressed support for the proposals as presented by PAC1a and PAC6. Making reference to the project East of Vienna, he proposed that the exchange on technical experiences should also include experiences with regard to ecological topics.

Mr. Robert Tögel from Via Donau highlighted the challenge of dealing with already running projects in relation to the Joint Statement since no completely new navigation infrastructure projects are currently expected.

PAC1a and PAC6 highlighted the importance of a balanced process with benefits for both sides, next to mentioning the need for a reaching progress in the coming years. A possible date for the indicated informal brainstorming session could be in April/May 2014 and the results will be reported back the Joint Statement group.

Session 6: Discussion on key lessons learned and future steps in support of the implementation of the Joint Statement

(Chaired by Mr. Dejan Komatina)

Mr. Komatina confirmed that the improvement has been made since the previous meeting. Reporting mechanisms started to work, while presentations and discussions are more focused on the application of JS principles.

Valuable inputs, visions and proposals were provided on EU policy, Danube projects and EU Danube Strategy.

There is a certain space for improving the whole process of implementing JS, especially in the following fields:

- Using the reporting system; not all projects are included in the reporting system,
- Involvement of all countries is necessary, as well as a balanced representation of the countries, i.e. the presence of relevant ministries is expected and looked forward.

Mr. Zavadsky expressed strong commitment of the ICPDR to support further implementation of the process. ICPDR will keep this process high on the ICPDR agenda, underlining that cross-sectoral cooperation is needed, while we would need more complex view on that topic in order to support the mechanism for the exchange of general standpoints. The 3rd EUSDR Annual Conference will provide an opportunity to communicate progress made.

Mr. Horst Schindler also pointed out that a lot of progress has been made. However many questions still remain open. While some stakeholders seem to express their satisfaction with certain measures it must be clear that a riverbank restoration or a reconnected side arm will not improve nautical

conditions. As the DC's main focus lays on the navigation on the Danube, Mr. Schindler expressed his hopes that the JS will lead to good results and solutions for all stakeholders. So far, a very important goal already has been achieved: the establishment of a common language.

Mr. Schwaiger from Austria expressed regret for the time limitations on the previous day regarding the discussion on the possible improvement of projects due to the Joint Statement process and informed about his impression from the limited feedback that an added value is given. Regarding the reservations expressed from navigation side on alternative technical solutions like for groynes, Mr. Schwaiger proposed to inform about such views next time in the beginning of the meeting in order to take it into account in the discussions. Furthermore he appreciated the introduction of the project reporting sheets and the targeted presentations provided at the meeting. With regard to the 2nd DRBM Plan he proposed to include a list on the different projects and some criteria on the status, e.g. performance of EIA or status of the implementation of different elements of the Joint Statement. With regard to the Co-Wanda project he proposed to provide a presentation at the next ICPDR Standing Working Group Meeting in June 2014 in order to inform relevant actors on the planned Convention on ship waste management. Finally, he stressed that the issue of waterway maintenance is seen as a blind spot in the frame of the Joint Statement process and raised the question how the Commissions can contribute, next to the issue of sediment management.

Mr. Nagl from DEF proposed to bring also experiences from German navigation projects into the process, that PAC1a and PAC6 should also look into the gaps and needs regarding assessments for biodiversity and appreciated the progress made in the discussions.

Mr. Seitz from Pro Danube expressed hesitation regarding the idea of addressing the maintenance issue in the frame of the Joint Statement process, expecting that this would lead to lengthy discussions.

Finally, Mr. Komatina from the ISRBC informed that the draft report of the meeting will be distributed in a due time and all participants will have the opportunity to provide their comments.

All statements and presentations from the meeting can be found on the web sites of the ISRBC.

Finally, the group was informed that the next Joint Statement will be organised by the ICPDR.

Annexes

- Agenda
- List of participants