

## **Thirteen Countries to Celebrate First Danube Day**

### Series of Events Planned Across Danube River Basin Countries on 29 June

VIENNA, 28 June (UN Information Service) -- A series of events have been planned for the celebration of the first Danube Day, 29 June, to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Danube River Protection Convention (DRPC) in Sofia, Bulgaria. Danube Day has been initiated by the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), a Vienna-based organization composed of representatives of the countries of the Danube River Basin, represented by their ministries. ICPDR is responsible for Water Management in the Danube Basin.

In Vienna, Danube Day celebrations will begin with an afternoon of entertainment at the Nordbahnbrücke (Neue Donau U6 station). At 18:30 hours, official proceedings will be formally opened by Catherine Day, Director General for Environment at the European Commission and President of the ICPDR (until the end of 2004), and attended by Josef Proell, Austrian Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management. This will be followed by a performance by the unique Electronic cellist, Wolfram Huschke, presentations and a special Danube buffet, prepared by the Embassies of Danube countries. Other events include virtual cruises through the Danube countries via a projection onto the water and a day-long cross-border Danube cycle tour which will be stopping at venues between Vienna and Bratislava, organized by the International Association for Danube Research. The Austrian Federal Army will also hold an impressive display on the river. The Danube Day will conclude with a final ceremony including keynote speeches at the Nordbahnbrücke.

“Through the Danube Day, we hope to communicate the principle of “basin solidarity” – people living in cities along the Inn River, the Mur, the Drava, the Tisza, the Sava, and the Prut are all connected with one another through this great river basin. We want to ensure that all peoples of the Danube share in the celebration of being part of the Danube basin and at the same time, share the responsibility of protecting this river and its ecosystems,” said Ms. Day.

The Danube river basin is the most international river basin in the world, connecting 13 European States (Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Serbia-Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine) and covers 10 per cent of the European continent. Protection efforts for the Danube have always been an illustration of cooperation between these countries, despite political and socio-economic differences.

More than 100 Danube Day activities will take place in all 13 Danube river basin countries. They are being organized jointly by governmental bodies, local authorities, NGOs and academia. The celebrations include concerts, river cleaning activities, bridge festivals, biking tours and more.

An overarching activity on the Danube Day will be the "Danube Art Master" - a school competition which will focus on young people. The competition is being jointly organized by the ICPDR and the Danube Environmental Forum, a non-governmental organization (NGO).

“Danube Day is an integral part of the communication activities of the ICPDR; from this year on, 29 June should be seen as a day for the manifestation of sharing the Danube river basin, one of the largest and most diverse river basins in Europe,” said Philip Weller, Executive Secretary of the ICPDR.

ICPDR is aiming at making Danube Day into an annual event. They are also working to facilitate and enhance cross-border cooperation by raising awareness of the fact that the river does not end at

its banks, but that the tributaries (such as the Lech, the Morava, the Sava or the Prut) and the land they drain are part of the river system.

The United Nations Development Programme/ Global Environmental Forum Danube Regional Project is financially supporting Danube Day 2004.

For further information, contact Jasmine BACHMANN, ICPDR Secretariat at UNOV,  
e-mail: [jasmine.bachmann@unvienna.org](mailto:jasmine.bachmann@unvienna.org), Phone: +(43 1) 26060 4373  
Home Page: <http://www.icpdr.org>, <http://www.danubeday.org>

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**United Nations Information Service Vienna (UNIS)**  
P.O.Box 500, A-1400 Vienna, Austria  
Tel.: (+43-1) 26060 4666, FAX: (+43-1) 26060 5899  
Email: [UNIS@unvienna.org](mailto:UNIS@unvienna.org), <http://www.unis.unvienna.org>