



Statement of Ms. Catherine Day

President of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), Danube Day 29 June 2004

The Danube is the most international river basin in the world. Ten years ago today, on 29 June 1994, Danube countries and the European Commission signed the Danube River Protection Convention committing themselves to cooperation in water resource management in the Danube basin – a commitment to work together to provide good quality and safe water for the eighty one million people of this region.

Since then, the Convention the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) has been established and matured as the forum for cooperation on water conservation among the Danube countries. We are here today to celebrate our successes and to acknowledge the challenges we have ahead of us. I am very honoured to be President of the Danube Protection Commission on this important day.

The Danube is a river that binds and connects people. It is also a river that connects important parts of Europe. The Danube begins in Germany, inside the European Union, and travels through ten countries on its remarkable journey to the Danube Delta and the Black Sea, shared between Romania and Ukraine. As a representative of the European Commission, and at the same time someone who has been personally involved in the accession process, I am especially pleased that four more Danube countries have now joined the European Union.

Irrespectively of their relations with the EU, 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 to protect this river and its ecosystems.



I am pleased to say that all the countries of the Danube have been actively participating in the work of the Danube Protection Commission and achieved important progress in their joint efforts to manage this shared river system. We have, for example,

- established a trans-national monitoring network (TNMN) to evaluate the water quality of the Danube.
- established an Accident Early Warning System that notifies downstream countries in the event of accidental pollution.
- created a 5 year Joint Action Plan that includes commitments for major reductions in pollution inputs to the Danube including major investments in sewage treatment.
- are in the process of completing a flood action plan and an analysis report for the Danube River Basin involving all the Danube countries.
- and, last but not least, we initiated this Danube Day.

Despite these success stories, we have a number of significant challenges ahead of us. First, pollution loads are still very high and considerable investments will be necessary in the coming years to improve treatment of wastewater, in particular in downstream countries. The risks of accidents and flooding are still unacceptably high and the degradation of the ecosystem continues, posing a threat to the regions biodiversity. Finally, future economic development and infrastructure projects will need to be planned to avoid putting more pressure on the ecosystem.

It is important, however, to remember that the actions of government alone will not bring improved water quality and environmental conditions to the Danube. Each and every one of us can do something to protect the ecosystem that supports us. Industry, farmers, municipalities, people of all ages, young and old, should join in and act in ways that preserve and restore, where necessary, our Danube River ecosystem.



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. The ICPDR established Danube Day as a platform for actions to be taken by governments and citizens throughout the Danube basin and we are very pleased to say that the response to this initiative has been much greater than we ever imagined.

Danube Day is an occasion to celebrate our Danube River. It is also a day to acknowledge the challenges ahead and to mobilize the energies and resources for meeting those challenges. Together, we must work hard to ensure that the river is clean and provides a foundation for the quality of our lives and for sustainable development throughout the basin.

Success in restoring and protecting the Danube River and its tributaries must begin with a public understanding of being connected to this great river basin. Danube Day is about inviting the 81 million people of this basin to discover their connection to the river and its tributaries and to express their support for its protection.

We encourage everyone to join with us in celebrating Danube Day.

For general information on Danube Day view www.danubeday.org
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