

DC Press Release:

7th Meeting on the Follow-up of the Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River Basin

Danube Commission, Budapest, 15-16 September, 2016

On the 15-16 of September, 2016 at the Danube Commission Headquarters in Budapest was held 7th meeting on the follow-up of the Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River Basin of the representatives of the Danube Commission (DC), the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), the International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC), representatives of the European Commission, national, transport, environmental and water management authorities and NGO's.

The DC, together with the ISRBC and ICPDR, supported by the European Commission, national authorities and NGOs are joining their efforts on the protection of the riverine environment and improvement of the sustainable development of the inland navigation in the Danube River Basin. For these purposes, annual follow - up meetings of the Joint Statement are constantly organized.



The meeting, bringing around 50 participants, was opened by the welcome speeches of the Director General of the DC, Mr. Petar Margic, the Executive Secretary of the ICPDR, Mr. Ivan Zavadsky, the Secretary General of the ISRBC, Mr. Dejan Komatina and the European Coordinator for the Rhine-Danube Corridor, Mrs. Karla Peijs (EC/DG-Move). The meeting was attended by the diplomatic representatives of the Member and Observer states of the DC.

The meeting was led by three moderators: Mr. Horst Schindler (DC), Mr. Ivan Zavadsky (ICPDR) and Mr. Dejan Komatina (ISRBC).

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The objectives of the meeting were:

- Information about progress in the implementation of the **Joint Statement on Guiding Principles on the Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River Basin**
- Discussion of the policy development in scope of inland navigation, financial opportunities and environmental relevant for the Danube region.
- Information and discussing new facts and perspectives of European inland waterway transport-Good Navigation Status and Pool of Experts
- Information about the state of IWT projects in the Danube basin
- Future plans and perspectives for enhancing the navigation and environmental protection in the Danube and its navigable tributaries.

All the participants confirmed that Joint Statement is a good general platform for further activities. This meeting has strongly supported the appliance of guidelines of the JS in the riparian countries and facilitates the process of sharing experience with all stakeholders. However, it is necessary to improve the process with more concrete mechanisms. For this purpose, a special consideration was given to the implementation of two important mechanisms: Good Navigation Status and Pool of Experts.

One key principle is the need for an interdisciplinary planning process from the beginning of a project. Other principles include minimizing the impacts of engineering interventions, using non-structural measures (e.g. improved fleets, technologies and information systems) and applying environmental impact assessments with public input. The discussion identified nine important areas that need to focus technical assistance on projects in the next period: geomorphology, hydrology, river ecology, river engineering, Environmental Impact Assessment, NATURA 2000, Water Framework Directive, inland navigation and waterways management.

The sides shared the view that the discussion held during the working meeting in Budapest was useful and would contribute to continue and intensify the dialog between the three Commissions (DC, ICPDR and ISRBC, EC), national authorities and NGOs on the protection of the riverine environment and improvement of the sustainable development of the Danube inland navigation.

As a result of the meeting the parts expressed their very positive attitude and the need to focus on concrete projects and activities in the countries that follow the Joint Statement. They were informed that the next event in the framework of the Joint Statement implementation process is scheduled to be hosted by the ISRBC in September 2017.