



*DONAUKOMMISSION
ДУНАЙСКАЯ КОМИССИЯ
COMMISSION DU DANUBE*

**The 8th Meeting of the Parties
to the Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin (FASRB)**

Dear Minister, Your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor and privilege to participate in this meeting. Please allow me to convey the sincerest greetings of his Excellency, Mr. Gordan Grlić-Radman, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia and President of the Danube Commission.

The Danube Commission (DC) supports its eleven Member States in their efforts to streamline the governance of inland navigation on the Danube and to further develop this major European inland waterway. The Danube Commission has been in a close partnership with the International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC) which has been built over many years of fruitful cooperation and joint activities.

Making better use of the Danube waterway and its navigable tributaries it is essential for developing a more sustainable and cost-effective transport system in the entire Danube Region. The European Union transport and infrastructure policies have acknowledged the strategic importance of the development of the Danube – Sava waterway system and made available substantial financial support for infrastructure investment.

The Sava River is the most important tributary delivering on average 1.700 cubic meters per second to the Danube (this is slightly more than the average discharge volume of the Danube at Vienna). Also, it has a significant potential for further growth in cargo and passenger transport. Back in the times of former Republic of Yugoslavia, the Sava River had contributed the transport system of the region with more than 7 million tons of cargo.

However, coming back to our present times and realities, we need to recognize that investing into the rehabilitation of the fairway of the Sava River and providing guaranteed minimum fairway conditions, as well as developing the Sava River ports into logistics hubs and centers of regional economic growth must become high priorities of the Sava riparian countries. As a result, these investments will provide competitive transport and logistics solutions to major industries in the region.

Transport by rivers is by far the most cost-effective transport mode after the sea-transport and has the capacity to contribute keeping the industries in the landlocked areas of the Danube – Sava region competitive. There is no doubt that only competitive industries can support economic growth, and thus guarantee jobs and social stability.

In this context, please allow me to refer to an important aspect: infrastructure and environment. The investment in the waterway infrastructure is not a threat for the environment, but an opportunity to protect and improve the environmental functioning of the highly valuable riverine ecosystems.

Indeed, to ensure that environmental protection and river engineering go-hand-in-hand, the three Commissions, namely the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), the DC and the ISRBC have facilitated the so-called “Joint Statement for development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection” process.

As a consequence, over the past few years, Good Practice projects supported by the European Commission in several countries, including Austria and Serbia, have clearly demonstrated that integrated planning of inland waterways transport (IWT) and execution of measures will benefit both: the environment and the inland navigation. Therefore, for this purpose, the application of the Joint Statement principles shall continue to guide our activities, and thus ensure the successful green river-engineering projects on the Sava River. The “Mixed Environment Transport External Expert Team Initiative (METEET)” which is steered by the three Commissions together with European Commission supports competent waterway authorities in developing this integrated approach for inland waterway infrastructure projects.

The Secretariat of the Danube Commission is ready to embark on a new journey of strengthened strategic cooperation and coordination with the Secretariat of the Sava River Basin Commission. At this stage, I have to say that after my first personal meeting in Zagreb, two weeks ago, I have been most impressed by the professional, hard and extremely efficient work of the Secretariat. Therefore, I see a clear and timely opportunity to complement our efforts and intensify our joint activities. I am convinced that together, we will succeed in our joint efforts to further support our Member States in tapping the economic and navigable potential of our rivers in line with the highest environmental standards.

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