



PRESS RELEASE

The Danube Commission (DC), under the presidency of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Serbia in Hungary, His Excellency Mr. Rade DROBAC, (President of the Danube Commission), held its eighty-seventh session on the 14th of December 2016 at the premises of the Danube Commission in Budapest.

The delegations of all eleven member states of the Danube Commission (the Republic of Austria, the Republic of Bulgaria, Hungary, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Romania, the Republic of Serbia, the Slovak Republic, the Ukraine and the Republic of Croatia) as well as the representatives of the observer states (Greece, the Kingdom of Belgium and Czech Republic) participated in the session. The session was also attended by the representative of the international organizations: the International Sava River Basin Commission, Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine, European Commission (DG MOVE).

The 87th session was open by Mr President's speech related the activity of the Danube Commission for 2016, mentioning the tasks for 2017. Mr. Drobac emphasised the main projects in which the Danube Commission is involved, namely *Good Navigation Status, Danube Stream, DANTE, Danube Skills, FAIRway*.

The session considered the issues indicated in the reports of expert groups, Technical group and Legal and Financial group meetings and adopted a number of the Decisions proposed by these groups.

During the 87th session, the representatives of the member states have approved some draft decisions in the different fields of the DC competence.

Specific technical issues have been discussed during the session. Respectively, the 87th session has approved the decision regarding the Recommendations on the technical prescriptions applicable for the inland navigation vessels.

International cooperation has also been brought into the attention of the session. The Secretariat of the Danube Commission offered a comprehensive information on its work in this field.

Additionally, the 87th Session was informed on the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Government of Hungary on Navigation on the Tisza River, signed in Nis, on 21 November 2016.

The ordinary 88th session of the DC will be held June 2017.



***Speech by the President of the Danube Commission at the 87th session
Report on the activity of the Danube Commission in 2016 and its key tasks for 2017***

According to the established tradition, allow me to summarize the outcomes of the Danube navigation in 2016 as well as to identify the key tasks of the Danube Commission for 2017.

Referring to the navigational conditions, it is worth noting that in the first half of 2016, with respect to the criteria adopted by the DC, they were basically satisfactory. That has contributed to a rather stable operating regime of the fleet traffic along the whole Danube.

The traditional aggravation of the navigational conditions, *i.e.*, the transition into a phase of the summer shallow water period, started in late August. It was particularly evident on the critical sections of the Lower Danube, which led to the stoppages of convoys and necessitated special pilotage.

Generally speaking, the indicators of the freight transport volumes for the first period were below the corresponding period in 2015.

The freight transport volumes in 2016 could be preliminary seen as slightly higher than in 2015. Reduced market potential as well as infrastructure bottlenecks and deterioration of navigational conditions continue to have an impact on the Danube navigation to a greater or lesser extent. In the forthcoming 2017, the utmost attention should be paid to these tasks.

The sector of the passenger transport by cabin vessels continues to perform a positive growth trend. We have grounds to believe that the Danube already accounts for over 50% of total passenger volume transported on the European inland waterways. The Danube Commission notes that this is the consequence of significant improvements in touristic clusters on the Danube and of an arrival of new vessels that respond to the peculiarities of the Danube navigation, including the shallow water period.

The navigation aspects will be presented in more detail at the session, under the agenda item "Market observation for the Danube navigation."

With regard to the Danube Commission's activities, it is important to mark out its increased performance, expanded and more specified nautical and technical topics under consideration. Of great significance is the direct involvement of the DC in the projects on inland waterways of the Pan-European importance, where the Danube Commission can gain not only new knowledge but also has much to offer from its own experience. It should be noted that the new projects, funded primarily by the European Union, cover almost all key points of the navigation, including infrastructure works (*e.g.*, *Good Navigation Status, Danube Stream projects*), elimination of administrative barriers and professional education and training (*DANTE, Danube Skills*).

It is necessary to continue active participation in the *FAIRway* project, keeping in mind that this is a support for the whole set of tasks for the development of the navigation infrastructure on the Danube defined by the *Fairway Rehabilitation and Development Master Plan for the Danube and its Navigable Tributaries*, endorsed at the Danube Ministers Meeting on 3rd December 2014 in Brussels.

Of particular importance is our participation in the *CESNI* Committee, taking into consideration countries that are not EU members but have significant fleet. Therefore, new proposals on technical standards and vocational training should meet the interests of all DC Member States.



In this context, we must strongly suggest that this matter should be considered in the Committee's decisions.

Our active participation in the Steering Committee and working groups of the Priority Area 1A of the European Union Strategy for the Danube region (EUSDR) should remain on the agenda, while understanding that many solutions of the above-mentioned Pan-European Programmes are concentrated within this activity.

It is also relevant to point out a successful launch of our cooperation with the Priority Area 11 "Security" EUSDR, where we have a solid theoretical base through the Recommendations on the security of navigation on the Danube adopted by the Danube Commission.

Meanwhile, the Danube Commission cannot overlook thorough and timely work on its own Work plan, periodically augmenting it by the new proposals from the DC Member States, which should contribute to the development of market, infrastructure and to the improvement of the security of navigation.





Information regarding the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Government of Hungary on navigation on the Tisza River (signed in Nis, on 21 November 2016).

Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Government of Hungary on Navigation on the Tisza River signed in Nis, Serbia, on 21 November 2016.

The process of good cooperation of the Ministry of National Development of Hungary and the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure of the Republic of Serbia on the subject "Consideration of Tisza River as an international waterway in future" started in October 2014 in Belgrade. Both sides agreed that revision of the Agreement between the Government of the Hungarian People's Republic and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia concerning navigation on the Tisza (March 1955) is necessary because it has become obsolete.

Four official sessions of the Hungarian-Serbian Common Working Group were held between the experts of the Serbian and the Hungarian Delegations (two in Hungary and two in Serbia). Result of the negotiations is adoption of a new Tisza Agreement. Both sides expressed that the new Tisza Agreement shall provide the certification of Tisza river as an international waterway. The text of the Agreement was harmonized during to 2015 and 2016 and in accordance with all relevant Directives and European Agreements and Conventions related to Inland Waterways.

Recognizing opportunities offered by the expansion of the network of international waterways, contributing to the economic and touristic development of the region, aware of the necessity of facilitating and development of international transport of goods on the waterways, emphasizing the importance of internal navigation that, compared to other types of transport, has economic and environmental advantages, both sides are agreed that the navigation on the Tisza River will be free and open for ships of all countries, regardless of the ships flag.

For supervising of the implementation and application of the Agreement provisions for both sides is acceptable to establish the Joint Committee. Two sides are agreed that the Joint Committee will consist of five members, appointed representatives of each Contracting Parties and should meet when necessary, but at least once a year.