International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine

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General Secretary
The Rhine, a European river
The Rhine catchment

3rd biggest European river

9 countries, 58 million inhabitants

Drinking water supply for 30 million people
Functions of the Rhine

The ideal river for ...

... nature protection

... agriculture

... drainage

... shipping

... tourism

... economic activities

... power production

... drinking water production
Changes over the centuries

1838

1872

1980
Cooperation in the ICPR

ICPR
Established 1950, amended in 1963 and 1999

Members
Switzerland, France, Germany, Luxemburg, Netherlands, European Union

Cooperation with Austria, Liechtenstein, Belgium (region Wallonia)

Observers
Intergovernmental Organizations (IGO's)
Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's)
Key elements of the cooperation

- De-centralised organization
- National delegations
  - political mandate
  - technical know how
  - funds (1.200.000 €/a)
- Political Framework, no sanctions
- All agreements by consensus. Measures as recommendations to countries
- Obligation to report on implementation of measures
- Legal framework provided by EU Directives (Water Framework Directive and Floods Directive)
- Small neutral Secretariat
Landmarks

• 1950 - Foundation
• 1963 - Treaty of Berne
• 1986 - Accident at Sandoz
• 1987 - Rhine Action Program
• 1993 and 1995 – Flooding
• 1999 - New Convention - entry into force 1 Jan. 2003
• 2000 - Programme Rhine 2020
• 2000 - EU Water Framework Directive
• 2007 - EU Floods Directive
Challenges

First Phase (50ties and 60ties twentieth-century)
• Building trust and mutual understanding
• Convincing society of the danger of continuous increasing water pollution

Turning Point: Sandoz Accident

• from short term detailed technical discussion to long term ambitious goals
• Integration of all relevant policy fields

For the future
• How correct the impact of environmental mismanagement of the past
• How to take account of uncertainties regarding the socioeconomic evolution and the impact of climate change
Lessons Learned

Both the Sandoz fire in 1986 and the floods of 1993 and 1995 were triggers for fundamental changes in policy

• always try to find a positive approach, even when catastrophic events have occurred

• start with building common denominator, not with points of disagreements
Cooperation

- Cooperation in transboundary waters at catchment level is an absolute requirement for IWRM
- Any Cooperation needs a legal framework in addition to a strong political commitment
- The UN-ECE Water Convention can support the setting up such cooperation
- Cooperation at international level to exchange experiences and knowledge would add to this
Thank you for your attention!