

ITEM 4

Sustainable Management of Water and Greening of the Economy

Statement of ICPDR President, Mykola Melenevskyi
to
The Seventh Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference,
Astana,
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Good Morning

Slide 1 – The Danube Map.

My name is Mykola Melenevskyi and I will address you in the next five minutes on behalf of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) of which I am President in 2011.

In this session I will focus on the tools that we use to ensure water efficiency in the Danube Basin; but also on how we encourage investments to take account of water quality and resource efficiency.

The ICPDR is an intergovernmental Commission coordinating water resources management in the Danube River Basin – the most international river basin in the world.

In the map behind me you see the vast network of rivers which make up the Danube River Basin. All water resources of the basin are interconnected and need to be managed as a whole irrespective of political boundaries. The watershed concept defines the geographic scope for the work of our Commission. The approach to tackle water management on the level of the entire basin is a prerequisite to sustainable water use.

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It is clear that water flows do not know political boundaries. But only the fall of the Iron Curtain the concept and understanding of multi-lateral, joint responsibility for the water within a river basin became formalized in a legal text and in the establishment of cooperative mechanisms. It led to the signing of the Danube River Protection Convention in June of 1994.

The Convention is an important and necessary management tool. Its principles of established a commitment of the countries to protection and sustainable use of water. This includes preventing pollution and ensuring water use efficiency.

The actions of one country should not undermine the ability of other countries to utilize and benefit from water resources – another key principle that was enshrined in the Convention. This requires an adequate transboundary monitoring programme, which was also called for by the Convention.

Starting from a sound monitoring and analysis, the ICPDR had the responsibility to prepare a River Basin Management Plan as required by the EU Water Framework.

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The River Basin Management Planning process as required under the Directive for EU member states includes a number of tools which support water efficiency and assist in greening the economy. The steps of the planning process include:

Working toward the goal of Good Status of Waters through

- 1) Defining the Status of rivers, lakes, and groundwater in a river basin
- 2) Defining the problems that are affecting each individual water body, and
- 3) Defining actions that need to be taken, or investments that need to be made, to prevent problems. This includes many elements which are assisting in Greening the economy or at least making sure that economic activities are sensitive to the actions needed to protect, restore and sustain water resources in a good condition.

The river basin management plan does not tell other sectors what to do. However, it tells them what actions they are undertaking which negatively affect water and it asks them to find solutions for addressing those problems.

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The Environment and Water Ministers in the Danube Basin met in February 2010 to discuss the river basin management plan and to determine what needed to be done to ensure that good status of water was realized.

They concluded that it was not sufficient for water managers to discuss these issues alone: a dialogue with other sectors which affect water was needed.

They committed themselves to helping other sectors make investments in pollution control and restoring natural ecosystem processes.

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The countries of the Danube River Basin did this within the framework of the ICPDR. They identified that at a minimum they needed to have dialogue with the Navigation sector, with the Hydropower sector and with Agriculture.

This dialogue needed to be targeted to finding ways that economic activity could flourish and at the same time water resources and river systems were protected and sustainably managed.

Although I do not have time to go into all the details of this we have, for example, successfully prepared a Joint Statement on Improving Inland Navigation and Ensuring Environmental Protection that has been agreed to by both sectors. There are also discussions with the Hydropower sector on how to meet energy needs without destroying river ecosystems as well as dialogue with the Agriculture sector on how farming can be carried out that does not damage water resources.

These initiatives are leading to investments that take account of water quality and resource efficiency. Our role as water managers has not been to tell them what investments and developments they should make, but to help them understand the effect of their actions on water. This leads to a higher efficiency and a greening of the economy.

I hope in this brief period of time I have been able to highlight some of the important elements needed in sustainably managing water such as:

- the need for a legal convention to regulate transboundary waters
- the necessity of taking a basin approach
- the necessity of a river basin planning process being established, and

The need for dialogue from water managers with managers from other sectors, such as Navigation, energy, and agriculture.

Thank you