

**Statement of the ICPDR Executive Secretary Mr. Philip WELLER
to the
“Inland Navigation Summit,” Vienna, February 13-14, 2006**

Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River we would like to express our appreciation to be present at this important meeting and for the opportunity to comment on the Action Plan and its relation to the work of the ICPDR. The Danube River Protection Convention (DRPC) was signed in June 1994, by the countries of the Danube River Basin, in recognition of concern over the occurrence and threats of adverse effects, in the short and long term, of changes in conditions of watercourses within the Danube River Basin on the environment, economies and well-being of the Danubian states.”

Since the signing of the DRPC all thirteen primary Danube Basin countries have ratified it and thereby pledged to “cooperate on fundamental water management issues and take all appropriate legal, administrative and technical measures, to at least maintain and improve the current environmental and water quality conditions of the Danube River and of the waters in its catchment area and to prevent and reduce adverse impacts and changes occurring or likely to be caused.”

The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) is responsible for overseeing the coordinated activities of the countries related to the Convention.

The ICPDR has also been designated by the countries of the Danube as the mechanism for coordination of a Danube River Basin Management Plan as required under the EU Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC (in short WFD). Although not all countries in the Danube are legally required to fulfill the obligations of the Directive they have agreed to meet the obligations under the Directive and to prepare a joint Danube Management Plan using the ICPDR as a platform. Work began on this in December 2000 and has been progressing since then towards the completion in 2009 of the first Danube River Basin Management Plan.

The first important step in meeting the commitments made in fulfilling the obligation under the WFD was completed in March 2005 when the ICPDR submitted to the European Commission the Danube Analysis Report (Roof Report 2004) that provides a basin wide overview on transboundary aspects of water quality in the Danube River basin.

The preparation of the Danube Analysis Report required active participation of all Danube countries. The report, which was adopted by Water Ministers at a December 2004 Ministerial Meeting, concludes that construction and maintenance of the

navigation channel, sluices and harbours, have historically had *significant negative effects on the aquatic environment* and that these hydromorphological alterations could undermine the goal of the WFD of achieving good ecological status of waters by the year 2015. (WFD Danube Basin Analysis 2004 (chapter 4.9.8.).

Required under the WFD is that follow-up is initiated to improve the methods of assessment of hydromorphological alterations and their implications, and to develop mitigation and restoration measures where possible, and particularly in preparing new projects.

The ICPDR is actively working to fully incorporate these considerations into the Danube Basin Management Plan that will be produced by 2009. For this reason we welcome the commitment in the Communication on Promotion of Inland Waterway Transport, “*to make waterway transport more efficient while respecting environmental requirements*”. There is clearly a need for dialogue between navigation authorities and interests, and the commissions and authorities responsible for environmental and water protection on our mutual interests. We are grateful that some important steps have been taken to strengthen this dialogue including the invitation you have extended to the ICPDR and International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine to attend this meeting.

The ICPDR would like to emphasize in this forum the willingness and interest to be both an active participant and provide leadership to an organized dialogue on the environmental impacts of navigation activities and projects on the Danube. We believe it is essential that a mechanism be found to have general agreement and cooperation on how such projects can proceed in a way that creates both economic and environmental benefits and ensures that the needed environmental impact assessments are undertaken at each specific project. By doing so we can ensure that the goals of the Communication can be realized and environmental concerns and legislation such as the Water Framework Directive are respected.