

Überschrift/Titel:	The Protection of the Danube and the Black Sea following the EU accession of Romania and Bulgaria
Untertitel:	New opportunities and new challenges
Redner/in:	State Secretary Matthias Machnig
Anlass:	Ministerial Conference of the Danube and Black Sea countries on 23 February 2007
Ort:	Bucharest

President

Minister

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to represent the EU Presidency and the German Environment Minister at this conference. Minister Gabriel regrets very much that he is unable to attend, and wishes the conference every success.

The timing for this conference has been well-chosen.

The accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the European Union on 1 January 2007 means not only that there are two more Danube countries in the EU, but also, for the first time, the EU borders the Black Sea. The EU accession of Romania and Bulgaria thus opens up new opportunities for the protection of the Danube River and the Black Sea and more intensive international cooperation in the entire Danube/Black Sea region.

There are a variety of ways to use these opportunities. In the framework of the EU Presidency, the German Government will support the significant expansion of EU cooperation with the Black Sea riparian states. Environmental protection will be a focus of this regional initiative. The emphasis will be on closely integrating existing institutions and instruments such as the Black Sea Commission and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River.

The successful cooperation of the Danube countries in the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) provides a solid basis for implementing our common objectives. I would like to remind you again of the key aspects of our cooperation in the Danube region: They are a joint vision, political will, information sharing and transparency.

At the forefront of the work is the implementation of the EC Water Framework Directive. Following the report on the 2004 analysis and the report on the monitoring

programmes which we will send to Brussels in March 2007, we will now set up the programmes of measures and the river basin management plan for the Danube river basin district by 2009. A further focus is on the implementation of the 2004 Flood Action Programme, especially at sub-basin level.

For the protection of the Black Sea, in 2001 the International Commissions for the Protection of the Danube and of the Black Sea both agreed on a Memorandum of Understanding. In the medium term, nutrient and hazardous substance loads must not rise above the level of the mid 1990s, and a return to conditions similar to those of the 1960s must be facilitated in the long term. Nutrients are a particular good example to show the positive effects of Romania and Bulgaria's accession to the EU, since according to the EC directive on urban wastewater treatment, the entire Danube basin is now a "sensitive area" and consequently more stringent requirements apply to wastewater treatment.

In order to achieve the goals of the Memorandum of Understanding, in addition to their previous activities, the Danube countries will implement a number of measures up to 2012 for the transposition of the Water Framework Directive, not only with regard to municipal wastewater treatment plants but also in the industry and agriculture sectors. In my view, special focus should be placed on the broadest possible introduction of phosphate-free detergents.

The opportunities presented by the EU expansion are not restricted to the positive effects of implementing current EU law. I would like to point out in particular the EU's various financing instruments which are available to both the Member States and neighbouring states of the EU. At national level, when selecting projects we should pay adequate attention to ensuring that these funds are used in a targeted way for the protection of the Danube River and the Black Sea.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Besides the EU enlargement, there is another reason why this conference is well timed. It highlights the fact that we are not only being presented with new opportunities, but are also facing new challenges.

In spring 2007 the UNDP/GEF Danube Regional Project will be concluded. For many years the project actively accompanied the work of both the ICPDR and the individual Danube countries, supporting them in a variety of ways. This project is rightly respected throughout the world as one of the GEF's successful models in the water sector. My thanks go to the donors and the team of the Danube Regional Project. Without you, the ICPDR would not have been so successful in water protection or public participation, to mention just two aspects.

For the Danube countries, the end of the UNDP/GEF Project means that in future they themselves must take on even more responsibility for the protection of the

Danube River. This Conference should therefore send the clear signal that the work of the ICPDR will continue to merit our political backing in future.

We must not neglect the protection of our rivers and seas because of other pressing environmental problems. The Danube River and the Black Sea are not only unique ecosystems, they also have an immense economic and social importance. For instance, for centuries the Danube has been supplying us with water which we use as drinking water, in agriculture, energy generation, navigation and fishing, tourism and recreation. Facilitating these different uses in the long term without jeopardising ecosystems - and if possible actually restoring them where necessary - is at the heart of our work.

We are becoming increasingly aware of the dramatic impacts of climate change on the water balance. The Symposium "Time to Adapt! Climate Change and the European Water Dimension", which in the framework of its EU Presidency, Germany hosted together with the European Commission in Berlin last week, developed initial recommendations on this issue. In the Danube/Black Sea region too, we will have to take greater account of the consequences of climate change in our water management planning and flood control.

The declaration which we will adopt today points out how we can jointly use the opportunities available to us, and overcome the challenges we are facing. In future too, Germany and the EU will remain a reliable and committed partner in the protection of the Danube and the Black Sea.