

Perspectives of the Environment Policy in the Danube Basin Teun Botterweg, Team Leader, Danube Programme Coordination Unit, Vienna

(abstract)

Environmental Programme for The Danube River Basin (EPDRB)

The Danube is a most complicated river from a political point of view. 13 countries have the whole or a substantial part of their territories within the Danube Basin: Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine. In 1991, the joint Environmental Programme for the Danube River Basin was established together with its governing *Task Force* which consists of representatives of 11 major Danube countries, NGOs and bilateral and international donors. A work plan agreed at the first Task Force meeting set out a 3-year programme comprising short-term, strategic, environmental and institutional development activities. The coordinating body is the *Danube Programme Coordination Unit* (PCU), based in Vienna.

The Task Force has established three Sub-Groups in order to establish a regional monitoring system, a system for reporting accidents and hazards, and a basin-wide system for exchanging textual information relevant for decision makers and the general public. The first stage of the emergency alarm standardised satellite communication system is operational since April 1997. Other actions include the production of a Danube Basin statistical Year Book on water quality. The first edition is to be published in 1998.

The Danube Strategic Action Plan Implementation Programme

The Danube Strategic Action Plan Implementation Programme (SIP) has been designed to give effect to the Danube SAP. It makes a positive and concrete contribution to the rehabilitation of the Danube environment, up to and including the receiving waters of the Black Sea. The SIP has a built-in provision for societal participation (through NGOs) in the process of implementation. The SIP addresses (demo) actions in five broad groups: Contaminants and Human Health; Sustainable Land Use; Wetlands and Nature Conservation; Sustainable Use of Water Resources; Institutional Capacity Building. The Programme reflects the transboundary nature of the problems facing the Danube countries. A sixth group, Basin Wide Projects, includes long-term approximation and cooperation actions, public awareness raising, general capacity-building activities, applied research. The SIP is managed so as to ensure that the Danube countries continue to lead the implementation process and that the donors requirements are met. It will also ensure dissemination of results to all Danube countries that have an interest in the results of the demo actions. SIP actions are at present undertaken with support of the EU Phare and Tacis Programmes.

The Danube River Protection Convention

The Danube River basin countries and the European Union signed the *Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the River Danube (the Danube River Protection Convention)* on 29 June 1994, in Sofia. The Convention is aimed at achieving sustainable and equitable water management. The signatories have agreed to cooperate on fundamental water management issues by taking: '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 as far as possible adverse impacts and changes occurring or likely to be caused ' (Art.2.2). An *International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River* (ICPDR) will be legally established to provide a framework for regional cooperation under the Convention. An interim ICPDR is in function, as well as an Interim International Secretariat.

The Danube countries agreed start implementing Convention before it comes into force. This will occur after all Danube countries have ratified it. Then, the activities now implemented in the EPDRB will be transferred to the DRPC. MLIM and AEWS activities will be incorporated in the ICPDR. Furthermore the IC has established an *Emission* Expert-group. The present Task force of the EPDRB will be transformed into the *Project Management Task Force (PMTF)*. The PMTF will work alongside the International Commission to develop action programmes, to coordinate international assistance and to facilitate environmental investment support (search for investment funds). As long as donors play a major role in programme assistance, the Programme Coordinator (and further staff) will be appointed by those donors.