

DECLARATION

On the Cooperation for the Creation of a Lower Danube Green Corridor

Signed 5 June 2000, Bucharest, Romania

We, the Minister of Environment and Water of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Minister of the Environment and Territorial Planning of the Republic of Moldova, the Minister of Waters, Forests and Environmental Protection of Romania, the Minister of the Environment and Natural Resources of Ukraine, meeting in Bucharest at the occasion of the launch of the Lower Danube Green Corridor Initiative,

Considering that the Lower Danube River and its floodplains and wetlands are a unique natural area which ecological, scenic and scientific significance is of international importance;

Recognizing the importance of a healthy floodplain and wetlands for the maintenance of water quality and environmental health in the Danube River and Black Sea and as a basis for creating economic development opportunities for local populations (fish harvesting, tourism etc);

Recognizing that a world wide scientific assessment of biodiversity by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) identified the lower Danube as one of the world's most important ecoregions with a representative selection of the world's most outstanding and distinctive biological resources;

Taking into account the Strategic Action Plan for the Protection and Restoration of the Danube River Basin, the GEF Danube River Pollution Reduction Programme Transboundary Analysis and a series of wetland related activities in the Danube basin funded by the EU Phare Multibeneficiary Programme for Environment which emphasized the need to take actions to protect and restore wetlands and floodplain habitats throughout the entire Danube River Basin;

Recognizing that the countries of the lower Danube are signatories to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar, 1971), the Convention on the Conservation of Wildlife and Natural Habitats in Europe (Bern, 1979) and the Pan European Landscape and Biological Diversity Strategy and have expressed national commitments to protect biodiversity;

Taking into account the Convention on Co-operation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River (Sofia, 1994) and the reinforcement of the principle of joint action from Danube countries to protect and restore the water quality and environmental conditions of the Danube river ecosystem;

Considering the existing damage to the floodplain and wetlands of the lower Danube and the increasing pressure of human activities having adverse effects on the ecological, biological and scientific values of the area;

Aware that individual actions of countries are not sufficient to bring about ecological restoration and conservation of the world wide important floodplain and wetland ecological systems of the lower Danube;

Convinced that further international actions aimed at maintaining the ecological functions of the floodplains and wetlands, ensuring sustainable use and development, and preventing and reducing pollution and further damage to floodplain and wetlands of the lower Danube should be taken as part of a progressive and coherent measures in order to protect the Danube and the Black Sea marine environment;

Have declared the following:

1. To take concerted action to create a Lower Danube Green Corridor that will expand the co-operation, co-ordination and consultation between the Republic of Bulgaria, the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine aiming at Danube River floodplain and wetland protection and restoration.

2. That the countries will establish the Lower Danube Green Corridor composed of a minimum commitment of 773.166 ha of existing protected areas, 160.626 ha of proposed new protected areas, and 223.608 ha areas proposed to be restored to natural floodplain. The Lower Danube Green Corridor will comprise the following areas:

- a) Areas with strict protection regime;
- b) Buffer zones with differentiated protection regime, in which human activities could be permitted and degraded areas restored;
- c) Areas where sustainable economic activities could be developed.

3. That within a period of one year after signing this declaration each country will prepare an action plan that will designate additional areas of floodplain that will be protected and restored.

4. To establish programs and take all suitable measures to ensure the protection of the Lower Danube Green Corridor wetlands and floodplain habitat by:

- a) protecting and restoring the wetlands and floodplain habitat in the Danube river basin, taking into account the necessity of protecting some social economic objectives of great importance from floods;
- b) setting up a common standard system for water quality indicators allowing a clear evaluation of the state of the environment and certain human activities in buffer and economic zones;
- c) protecting and improving the quality of water and environmental conditions of the Danube river ecosystem.

5. To organise a regular exchange of information in order to achieve effective protection of the Lower Danube Green Corridor. The exchange will include the following information:

- a) qualitative and quantitative data on water and aquatic ecosystems;
- b) experiences gained through the application of best available techniques and results of research and development in the fields of wetland protection and water management;
- c) measures for prevention, control and reduction of pollution in the floodplains and wetlands in the lower Danube basin;
- d) economic, social and environmental impacts of the establishment of the Lower Danube Green Corridor

6. To recognise the crucial role of environmental Non-Governmental Organisations in the expression of public interests and ideas in a democratic framework and to offer citizens and environmental NGOs the opportunity to play an active role in decision making processes.

7. To seek partners locally and nationally as well as internationally (i.e. GEF, UNDP, UNEP, World Bank, EU, WWF, IUCN, Ramsar Convention) and Governments (i.e. Austria, Germany, Denmark, Netherlands) in order to co-operate and assist in the creation and maintenance of a Lower Danube Green Corridor.

8. To take efforts to develop economic instruments which contribute to the reduction of the costs from pollution (polluter pays principle) and to promote sustainable development and ecological imperatives in sectorial policies and in mobilising national funds for environment and other ways for private and public financing.

9. To present the Lower Danube Green Corridor as a Gift to the Earth as part of the WWF Living Planet Campaign which is aimed to secure the conservation of the world's most important biological resources and ecosystems into the next millennium.

Signed in the city of Bucharest, on 5 June 2000, in six original copies, each in Bulgarian, Moldavian (Romanian), Romanian, Ukrainian and English, all texts being equally authentic. In case of divergences on interpretation, the English version shall prevail. Each party will receive one original copy. One original copy shall be deposited with the Secretary General of the Bureau of the Convention on Wetlands (the depositary). One original copy will be given to WWF, symbolising a Gift to the Earth.

Evdokia Maneva

Minister of Environment and Water of the Republic of Bulgaria

Arcadie Capcelea

Minister of the Environment and Territorial Planning of the Republic of Moldova

Romica Tomescu

Minister of Waters, Forests and Environmental Protection of Romania

Ivan Zayets

Minister of the Environment and Natural Resources of Ukraine