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JOINT DECLARATION

*Adopted at the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Danube Region
by the parliamentary delegations from the Republic of Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Bulgaria, the Republic of Croatia, Federal Republic of Germany, Hungary, Romania, the Republic of Serbia, the Republic of Slovenia and the Czech Republic*

Acknowledging the great importance of the Danube River, its environment and natural resources for economic and social prosperity and life standard of citizens, as well as of the critical importance of the regional cooperation and coordination for achieving sustainable development of the Danube river basin;

Recognizing enormous potential of the Danube River as environmental and economic backbone for entire Danube Region;

Starting from the basic principles of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region;

Emphasizing the opportunity for further economic development of the Danube region through development of sustainable policies in the field of integrated management of natural resources and the environmental protection, and the preservation of good neighbourly relations;

Taking into consideration joint efforts of all international actors in strengthening of stability and cross-border cooperation;

Attaching importance to the development of the Danube basin and the navigation, regulation of the usage and protection of the water ecosystems;

Indicating the necessity of joint action in the area of flood protection in accordance to the efficient international and legal framework for successful regional cooperation in that area as well as the wish for better coordination of water resources management and the Danube river basin waterways;

Being committed to the modernization of transport, energy, promotion of culture and tourism, being aware of the need for enhancement of mobility and communications, through improvement of development measures and promotion of transport policy;

Contributing to the expansion of the network established in the region to identify certain programmes and priorities for regulation of waterways and port infrastructure;

Emphasizing the advantages of water transport and the importance of renewal of waterways and ports for further economic and social development of this regional transport corridor;

Confirming their commitment to make all necessary efforts to enforce law under the framework of international legal regimes and instruments of water law, international law on environment, waters, floods or coordination of planning and investment in infrastructure programmes to strengthen trans-European transport network,



Bearing in mind the common history, agreed to further encourage the citizens of the region to:

- the integration and expansion of cooperation based on fundamental European values of human dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of law and respect for minority rights
- use potential of the Danube region natural resources in order to expand economic cooperation through the development of all forms of transport, in particular highlighting the advantage of water transport as a reliable, safe and ecological form of transport as well as the importance of reconstruction and development of navigation and port infrastructure, stressing the importance of redirecting part of the freight transport by using the potential of inland waterways which means low energy consumption, greater capacity, low emissions and low costs of transport;
- invest more in the development of modern technologies, traffic increase, modernization of waterways of the Danube river basin and faster development of ports and port infrastructure that allows establishment of direct transit cargo flows in the frame of multi-modal transport system, optimal flow of goods with modern reloading equipment, high technology and quality of port services, which facilitates connecting the Danube ports with the ports of West and East Europe as well as the ports of the North and the Black Sea and other European corridors;
- revive river transportation which has the potential to respond to the growth in the trade sector in the whole Europe but having in mind that the economic interests need to be harmonized with environmental interests;
- protect unique natural values and heritage of the Danube region;
- maintain communication and regular exchange of experiences between the countries involved in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, and co-ordination in the European integration process;
- preserve peace, democracy, the rule of law as a precondition for the development of the entire Danube area, with the establishment of interconnections that, among other things, provide prosperity and improve the level of socio-economic dimension, competitiveness, security and transport perspective, promotion of unique water ecosystems as well as the expansion of transport nodes by connections with other river basins and ports in the interior;
- raise awareness about the different activities that affect natural and water resources, including production of hydro electricity, agriculture and river navigation, knowing that many problems of the Region do not recognize borders, so that floods, transport and energy links, environment protection and security challenges require unique approaches and common action.

Also welcoming the development of a number of effective mechanisms for public participation and involvement of stakeholders at the level of the Danube River Basin and its sub-basins, they should, inter alia, promote expansion of integrated planning project approach for waterways, creating the necessary conditions for sustainable development of inland navigation by harmonizing different use of waterways (eg. for freight transport, energy, flood protection, tourism or supply of drinking water),

Parliamentarians of the Danube region call for:

- More active role of all parliamentarians from the Danube region in achieving the Danube Strategy objectives, bearing in mind synergy between development process and regional strategies, as well as the potential benefits from applying the best practices in the framework of EU integration process;
- Continuous inclusion of civil society representatives and other stakeholders, as well as regional and local communities in the areas of their mutual interest;
- Further encouragement and resumption of dialogue with relevant stakeholders in the areas of sailing, hydropower, agriculture, environmental protection and flood management, with the aim of integration the economic, social and ecological aspect of planning and implementing of infrastructure project, by respecting the principles of regional sustainable development.



Final remarks

We believe that EU Strategy for the Danube region helps to find a coordinated, long-term solution for challenges that may not be resolved at the national level. Therefore, we expect that the Strategy will contribute considerably in enhancement of coordination between authorities and organizations operating in the Danube region, and bring prosperity, sustainable development, creating jobs and greater security.

Appreciating the significant support that international organizations and institutions have provided previously in realization of important projects, we call organizations and institutions to support, through redirecting adequate funds, further implementation of future, priority development projects, promotions of mutual activities and realization of results.

Taking into account the work in joint activities in the framework of the Danube Strategy, we emphasized that we are able to establish closer connections in many fields that contribute to a significant improvement of relations between our countries.

We express our support to international committees for establishment of cooperation with all relevant partners (especially the EC, the International Danube Commission; International Commission for the Protection of the Danube (ICPDR); International Sava River Basin Commission).

Emphasizing gratitude for hosting this meeting, we announce the organization of the next Conference of Danube Parliamentarians for year.... in.....