

D R A F T

Conference "EU Strategy for Danube - a new Challenge in the Context of the
Territorial Cohesion in the South East European Space"
Bucharest, 20 January 2010
Address by H.E. Mr. Danilo Vucetic, Ambassador

Distinguished Representatives of the Romanian Government,
Honourable European Commission Representatives,
Honourable Colleagues from the Ministries of Danube River States,
Dear friends of the Danube,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my particular pleasure and honour to attend this Conference devoted to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and to cooperation between the Danube River States, because the Danube is an extremely important economic, political and developmental subject-matter.

In my opinion, it is a positive development that the view has prevailed in Europe that the Danube, as a natural, civilisational and historical value, cannot be left to steer its own course haphazardly, as well as that, as regards Europe, the subject of Danube river cooperation is now approached in a coordinated, serious and promising way.

It is obvious that agreement has been achieved that the Danube region should become one of the core regions in Europe (in addition to the Baltic and Mediterranean ones) and, in the light of its potential, crucial for Europe's economic development.

The Republic of Serbia fully supports the decision of the European Council to mandate the European Commission to devise an EU strategy for the Danube river basin and is ready, not only to be an active partner in the preparation of this strategy, but also to engage its own experts and institutions, and apply its unique experience in elaborating issues relevant for the strategy.

We expect that the European Commission will equally promote all Danube river States in its strategy, both those already being EU members and those on their way of becoming its full-fledged members.

The fact is that all engagements concerning the Danube become meaningful and gain in importance only if this greatest European river is considered as a whole. We believe that there is a political consensus among all Danube river States on this point. No one acting on its own can apply the range of measures and undertake the activities necessary to confront the challenges and explore the opportunities of the region.

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We strongly believe that the comprehensive strategy of the Danube river States should generally enable those Danube river States which have not yet joined the EU to be more strongly and intensively included in the European integration process.

I would like to inform you that we have established a special Inter-Ministerial Working Group for cooperation with the EU on the Danube issue. The Vice-Premier of the Serbian Government responsible for European integration, Mr. Djelic, has been appointed to chair this Working Group. Mr. Djelic has also been appointed as the National Coordinator for EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

I would like to point out that Serbia perceives integration through Danube river cooperation as its own opportunity and a pledge of significant advantages, but at the same time, it is ready to face the responsibilities resulting therefrom.

Serbia is now preparing a **non paper** which will take into account national objectives, priorities and actions already undertaken concerning developments related to the Danube. We are planning to submit this document very soon to the EC. Before finalising this document we are going to discuss the issue with a broader audience - local authorities, municipalities, civil sector, economic chambers, NGO and so on.

The Republic of Serbia has defined the following priorities for the Danube strategy:

a) **Establishment of a safe navigation system and affirmation of the rule of law principle in the entire Danube river basin**, having in mind first and foremost:

- fight against organised crime and trafficking;
- UXO, mine and debris clearance;
- providing security of the state border on the Danube;
- developing a system of protection against flooding and introduction of a common early-warning system.

b) **Development of transport, energy and information and communication technologies (ICT) in the entire Danube river basin**, with special emphasis on:

- improvement of the transport system, development of Danube infrastructure and especially harbours on the Danube;
 - establishment of full navigation control on the Danube through the development of River Information Services (RIS);
 - energy system / the Strategy of Serbia's Energy System Development by 2015 envisages the development of an integrated energy system through the construction of two hydro-electric power plants on Danube: one at Djerdap and the other in the Novi Sad area;
- Plans have also been made to identify the Danube River potential for the generation of energy from renewable sources;

c) **Protection of the environment and feasible use of natural resources in the entire Danube river basin**

- Serbia considers among the priorities in this area: meeting the relevant EU standards and implementation of the EU Framework Directive on Waters;

- particular attention will be given to addressing the problem of waste waters polluting the Danube.

d) **Economic development and strengthening regional cooperation and partnership throughout the Danube region**, with special emphasis on

- tourism development in the Danube area -

Serbia's Strategy for the Promotion of Tourism devotes particular attention to promoting the Danube river.

I would like to emphasize that in some of the above mentioned priority areas, project proposals have already been drafted and that the implementation of some projects is already underway.

However, in order to be able to implement most of the priority projects which are essentially of a wider regional significance, Serbia would have to be fully integrated in the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube river basin and to receive support and assistance from the relevant EU funds, as well as to intensify its cooperation with the neighbouring Danube river States.

A good foundation for Danube infrastructure projects in the Republic of Serbia can be found in the "Master Plan" which Serbia has prepared for its segment of the Danube and the Danube river basin. It is a general feasibility study developed according to the EU methodology and designing regulations, in cooperation with experts from the EU.

In order to ensure more effective use of the Danube as a resource, Serbia needs significant investments, primarily in infrastructure development, with particular emphasis on the importance of modernizing ports, creating conditions for multimodal transport, renewal of fleets, building of new bridges and riverbank regulation.

Therefore, Serbia welcomes and supports the initiative, within the framework of the activities related to the EU Strategy for the Danube river basin, to be host of a broader Donor Conference, in the autumn of 2010, for the purpose of bringing together the interested donors who are likely to provide funding for the Danube river projects.

Before I close, I would like to extend my deep gratitude to our dear hosts for their excellent organization of this Conference and for their warm hospitality.

Thank you for your attention.