

Conference of Rhine Ministers

Ministerial declaration

29 January 2001 in Strasbourg

The Ministers in charge of water protection in the Rhine catchment area and the European Commission met in Strasbourg on 29 January 2001 under the presidency of Mrs. Dominique Voynet, French Minister of Spatial Planning and Environment.

Participants in the conference:

For Germany, Mr Dr.-Ing. E.h. Dietrich RUCHAY, under-secretary, representing Mr. Jürgen Trittin, Federal Minister for Environment, Nature Protection and Nuclear Safety

For France, Mrs. Dominique VOYNET, Minister of Spatial Planning and Environment

For Liechtenstein, Mr. Norbert MARXER, Minister of Environment

For Luxembourg, Mr. Paul HANSEN, Director of Environmental Administration representing Mr. Michael WOLTER, Minister of the Interior

For the Netherlands, Mrs. drs. Monique de Vries, Vice Minister of Transport, Public Works and Water Management

For Austria, Mr. Dr. Wolfgang STALZER, representing Mr. Wilhelm Molterer, Minister of Agriculture and Environment

For Switzerland, Mr. Philippe ROCH, Minister of state, Director of the Federal Office for Environment, Forestry and Landscape

For Wallonie, Mrs. Anne TRENTELS, representing Mr. Michel Foret, Minister of Spatial Planning, Urban Development and Environment

For the European Commission, Mr Prudencio Perera MANZANEDO representing Mrs. Margot Wallström, Commissioner for Environment

Observers

Representatives of intergovernmental organisations and of non governmental organisations

The Ministers of Germany, France, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland and Wallonie (Belgium) in charge of water protection in the Rhine catchment area and the European Commission welcome the considerable impetus the Directive establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy (2000/60/EC) has given to the water policy of the European Union. This directive aims at introducing a co-ordinated water resources management in every catchment area, at improving the quality of water bodies and at increasing public participation in water policy.

They underline the importance of the framework directive for the transboundary co-ordination in international river basin districts.

They note with satisfaction that the multilateral, bilateral and regional co-operation existing for decades in the Rhine catchment from the source to the outlet into the North Sea proves to be very successful. In this connection the results of the work of the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine, the International Commission for the Protection of the Moselle and the Sarre, the International Water Protection Commission for Lake Constance and the International Governmental Commission of the Alp Rhine speak for themselves.

They state that the ICPR has drafted a program on the sustainable development of the Rhine setting aims similar to those of the framework directive and that the other commissions too orient their programs towards the framework directive.

Against the background of the framework directive they consider the co-ordinated drafting of an international management plan for the Rhine river basin district to be of great importance. They declare to want to put the solid and efficient co-operation in matters of Rhine protection to good use.

The Ministers and the European Commission underline that the EC member states are sole responsible for the implementation of the directive, but they esteem the co-ordinated approach to be necessary in the Rhine catchment.

Desirous to efficiently meet the challenges of and the schedule for the implementation of the framework directive the Ministers and the European Commission decide to continue the co-ordination activities deployed so far and to maintain the existing structures of the present steering group.

This steering group consists of national government representatives and further national/regional representatives. The presidency of the steering group will periodically alternate between the EC member states in the Rhine catchment. The above mentioned international commissions may be invited to participate in the meetings as observers. The steering group will co-ordinate the work required in the entire river basin district in order to assure that the directive is applied coherently and that an international management plan is drafted for the Rhine river basin district.

The Ministers and the European Commission welcome the decision taken by Switzerland as non EC member state to be represented in the steering group and to support this group in its co-ordinating and harmonizing work on the basis of Swiss legislation, thus expressing its intention to co-operate with the European Union in the field of water policy.

The Ministers and the European Commission invite the steering group to examine which means and which further organisational measures are required for the implementation of the

co-ordinating activities. Whenever necessary they will also examine the funding procedures of the joint work necessary for drafting the co-ordinated management plan. When doing so they will particularly take into account the fact that not all of the Rhine bordering countries are obliged to implement the framework directive. They welcome the offer of the ICPR to support the steering group within the available capacities.

The Ministers and the European Commission express the desire that their approach in the Rhine catchment area will be a model for the implementation of the framework directive.