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Theme: Monday, November 8th, 2010

The Danube Summit: Opening addresses by the Prime Minister of Romania, Emil Boc



Mr. President of the European Commission,
Mr. President of Romania,
Prime-ministers,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor for me to host the Summit of the countries in the Danube region. Your presence here is by itself a commitment and a support for future undertakings and I would like to thank you for this.

We live in an area which has become famous since centuries and has proven to be a functional place in terms of economic and cultural ties between the riparian communities.

Please allow me to come up with several ideas, in addition to what has been said during the public awareness campaign on the Danube Strategy.

A few months ago, while I was taking part in the Danube Summit held in Budapest, I spoke about transport interconnections, about ambitious plans dedicated to environmental protection, and about the imperative necessity to launch a Danube Strategy which will implement the concept of territorial cohesion included for the first time in the Lisbon Treaty.

We all agree that a modern vision of sustainable and innovative development of the whole region is needed. Our strategy represents the basis of such an approach. It is my turn now to thank the European Commission and our colleagues from the countries in the region, for their special efforts to design the necessary framework in order to begin the implementation of the Danube Strategy starting with the first half of the next year.

We now need to move forward, to come up with concrete projects and actions and to agree a multi-level governance of the Danube Strategy.

Local communities and regions are called upon to play an essential role since they are the main recipients of our undertaking.

The presence of Mrs. Mercedes Bresso to our Summit, on behalf of the European Cities and Regions, is a proof of commitment and involvement of the local communities in supporting the Danube Strategy. Indeed, without properly considering this administrative level, pragmatic results cannot be achieved.

Development planning of certain areas, especially the border regions, should be carried out jointly by the authorities of the respective regions and communities. The available funds should be better used so that the citizens get access to better quality services.

And I would like to give you just two examples in this respect: Ruse - Giurgiu and Szeged - Arad - Timisoara neighboring regions. These regions should be coordinated through joint planning, so as to complement their actions and avoid allocation of redundant funds.

The Danube Strategy is a significant project - equally regional and European - advancing a specific pattern guided by dynamic parameters such as sustainable development, energy security or cohesion policy.

Therefore, we have to forge multiple links between universities, institutes, groups of excellence and companies in the Danube Basin, while launching new innovating and technology-based projects.

As regards the four pillars of our Strategy, there are some major priorities and projects that can become flagship initiatives.

In terms of connectivity, we need to bring together municipalities of the countries and regions along the Danube through a network of motorways, high-speed trains and regular flights. It is sometimes easier to get from Bucharest to Paris, London or Brussels than to get a direct connection with Sofia, Zagreb or

Belgrade. This has to be changed.

On the other hand, environmental protection is a prerequisite of any infrastructure planning and economic development. Today's economy can only be a "green" one, for jobs creation and sustainable growth, as well as for a necessary interrelation with a changing global economy. Danube is a living river and it should be preserved as such, using the latest and the best available technology.

The Danube Strategy revealed the Danube Delta as a unique piece of nature. We have the obligation to preserve and protect this jewel. Therefore, Romania's proposal in the Danube Strategy's context is to set up an international institute to perform integrated research and multi-disciplinary projects regarding the sustainable management of wetlands, with a focus on the Danube River – Delta – Black Sea systems.

In terms of economic and social development, we have to build up cooperation platforms and to rally a critical mass of private companies that could come up with new innovative projects that will be part of the Action Plan of the Danube Strategy.

Knowledge-based society is an incentive for the younger generation, so as to be directly involved in future projects, both as beneficiaries and creative future leaders.

It is also a great opportunity for young people, local communities, business sector and all those who, through their creativity and imagination, transform ideas into action.

The main obstacle the Danube Strategy will have to overcome, on the long term, will be to maintain a constant and high interest of public authorities and citizens for its actions. Meanwhile, we have to focus on the financial and economic crisis effects and to build-on our economies. The Danube Strategy might be very useful in this endeavor, also.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that after the speech of president Barroso, I am very optimistic about the Danube Strategy, having in mind that this is already a pragmatic view. We also have an action plan, a budget and the political will. Having these three elements, I am sure the Danube Strategy will be a success for the European Commission and for Europe as a whole.

Thank you very much!

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