

International Commission for the Protection of the Meuse River

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION OF LIEGE

The Ministers responsible for water management in the Meuse and Scheldt River basins, met in Liege on 30 November 2001 under the chairmanship of Mr. Michel Foret, Walloon Minister for Land Use Planning, Urban Planning and the Environment.

The conference was attended by:

For the French Republic, Mr Bernard BAUDOT, representative of Mr Yves COCHET, Minister for Land Use Planning and the Environment

For the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Drs. Monique DE VRIES, State Secretary for Transport, Public Works and Water Management

For the Walloon Region, Mr Michel FORET, Minister for Land Use Planning, Urban Planning and the Environment

For the Flemish Region, Ms Vera DUA, Minister for the Environment and Agriculture

For the Brussels-Capital Region, Mr Jean-Michel MARY, representative of Mr Didier GOSUIN, Minister for the Environment and Water Policy, Nature Conservation, Public Cleanliness and Foreign Trade

For the Kingdom of Belgium, Mrs Annemie VERMEYLEN, representative of Mrs Magda AELVOET, Minister for Consumer Protection, Public Health and the Environment

For the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr. Dr-Ing. E.h. Dietrich RUCHAY, representative of Mr Jürgen TRITTIN, Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety

For the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Mr Paul HANSEN, representative of Mr Michel WOLTER, Interior Minister

As observers: representatives of the European Commission and governmental organisations.

As guests: representatives of non-governmental organisations.

The Ministers note with satisfaction that the co-operation within the International Commission for the Protection of the Meuse River (ICPMR) and the International Commission for the Protection of the Scheldt River (ICPSR) has facilitated the respective actions of the different Parties and has contributed to the setting up of common initiatives for the improvement of the Meuse and the Scheldt.

The European Directive establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy (2000/60/EC), which came into force on 22 December 2000, gives important new impulses to water policy and provides for broader coordination. This directive aims to implement, for each river basin district coordinated and integrated water management, to improve the quality of water and ecosystems and to strengthen public consultation.

In order to comply with the obligations set by the Framework Directive, the Ministers decided to create international river basin districts for the Meuse and the Scheldt respectively within the meaning of article 3 of the Water Framework Directive. The general geographical delimitations of the surface waters of these international river basin districts "Meuse" and "Scheldt" are established on the attached maps (doc Mconf/01-3 and 4).

The Ministers approve the lists of transboundary groundwaters belonging to the "Meuse" international river basin district and those belonging to the "Scheldt" international river basin district (Mconf/01-5 and 6).

The Ministers underlined that the EU Member States are themselves responsible for the implementation of the Water Framework Directive, but they consider that a coordinated river basin approach is necessary for both the Meuse and the Scheldt.

The multilateral coordination for the implementation of the Water Framework Directive at the level of the international river basin district "Meuse" will take place within the ICPMR; that for the implementation of the Water Framework Directive at the level of the international river basin district "Scheldt" will take place within the ICPSR. The Ministers agree that, for transboundary sub-basins (transboundary surface, groundwater and coastal waters), coordination will take place within an appropriate regional framework

Germany and Luxembourg, which are not yet Parties to the ICPMR participate on an equal footing in the consultation and decision-making process related to this coordination.

The Ministers of Germany and Luxembourg declare that their countries intend to accede to the Agreement on the Protection of the Meuse and, pending formal accession, will collaborate as much as possible in the work of the ICPMR.

The Minister of the Federal Government of Belgium declares that his country also intends to accede to the Agreement concerning the Protection of the Meuse and the Agreement concerning the Protection of the Scheldt, within the framework of its own competences and in accordance with the provisions laid down to this effect in these Agreements. Pending its formal accession, the federal government will cooperate as much as possible in the work of the ICPMR and the ICPSR. In the perspective of the co-ordination of the implementation of the Framework Directive, the Belgian Federal State will make its contribution with regard to its competences over the coastal waters under Belgian jurisdiction.

The Ministers decide to produce a single international river basin management plan for the Meuse and a single international river basin management plan for the Scheldt, and to coordinate them within the ICPMR and ICPSR respectively. They take note of the main lines of the structure of these management plans, as proposed by these two Commissions (doc Mconf/01-7).

Ministers welcomed the agreement on the content and nature of coordination (Mconf/01-8) as well as on the work plan for short-term coordination actions related to the Water Framework Directive (Mconf/01-9), as established by the ICPMR and ICPSR. Planning will be implemented, evaluated and adapted within the ICPMR and ICPSR to meet the deadlines of the Framework Directive.

In order to strive for an integrated water management, the Ministers of the Contracting Parties to the Agreement concerning the Protection of the Meuse and the Agreement concerning the Protection of the Scheldt, mandate the ICPMR and the ICPSR to carry out within them any multilateral consultation concerning the measures to be taken to contribute to the mitigation of the effects of floods and droughts, including preventive measures. The transnational working group "Meuse floods" will be integrated into the ICPMR for this purpose.

They approved the interim evaluation report of the Meuse Action Programme and the interim evaluation report of the Scheldt Action Programme and instructed the ICPMR and the ICPSR to present a proposal for the second phase of their Action Programme in 2003, taking into account the implications of the Water Framework Directive and the new tasks entrusted to them.

The Ministers entrust the ICPMR and the ICPSR with the task of evaluating the provisions to be made for the accomplishment of these tasks, both at the level of organisation and of human and financial resources.

They also entrust the ICPMR and the ICPSR with the task of proposing the modifications to be made to the Agreement concerning the Protection of the Meuse and to the Agreement concerning the Protection of the Scheldt pursuant to the present decisions.