Clearance of the fairway of the Danube: Community contribution to international fund

2000/0125(CNS) - 24/05/2000 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to present a proposal for a Council Decision concerning the Community contribution to the International Fund "Clearance of the Fairway of the Danube". CONTENT : during NATO airstrikes on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) between March 23 and June 1999, in the context of the Kosovo conflict, three bridges in the vicinity of the town of Novi Sad were destroyed. The debris from these bridges, as well as the risk of unexploded ordnance in the area, prevents navigation on the Danube, with serious economic consequences for the riparian states. Therefore, on 25 January 2000, the Danube Commission, an inter-governmental institution with competence for navigation on the Danube, adopted a project proposal for the "Clearance of the fairway of the Danube" and submitted it to the European Commission with a request for co-funding. The project involves the removal of the debris of the bridges, the removal of any unexploded ordnance, and the restoration of the riverbed in that area. The Commission, having assessed the project proposal and having received assurances from the Danube Commission has concluded that the project is viable and recommends that the EC budget contribute up to 85% of the total estimated costs of the project - a maximum contribution of EUR 22 million - with the remainder of the costs being paid by the Danube Commission. It has been agreed that an international fund entitled "International Fund for the Clearance of the Fairway of the Danube" will be established and managed by the Danube Commission. The Fund itself will be established in Vienna, under Austrian law. Moreover, the EC contribution to the costs of the project will be paid into this international fund. The EC contribution will be drawn from several EC budget lines, as no one budget line covers all the countries which will benefit from the restoration of the Danube navigation. With regard to the timing of this project, the Lisbon European Council Conclusions called for the Danube to be cleared for navigation by summer. In order to ensure that work can at least begin during this summer period, it will necessary for the legislative procedures on the part of the EU to be completed as quickly as possible. In conclusion, the Commission requests the Council: - to transmit this proposal to the European Parliament under the urgency procedure and; - to approve the proposal for a Council Decision concerning the Community contribution to the international fund "Clearance of the Fairway of the Danube".