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## **Serbia Takes Over Presidency of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River**

VIENNA, 21 January (UN Information Service) – Serbia today took over the Presidency of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) for the year 2008. The handover was made during an official ceremony hosted by the outgoing Presidency, Romania, at the premises of the Permanent Mission of Romania in Vienna, Austria.

The Minister for Environmental Protection of Serbia, Saša Dragin, will serve as ICPDR President and guide its activities in 2008. The ICPDR was created in 1998 to coordinate the protection and improvement of the Danube and its tributaries. “As the person responsible for environmental protection in Serbia, I know the difficulties in combining the needs of nature with the sustainable use of natural resources,” said Mr. Dragin.

Mr. Dragin will emphasize the rapid and efficient sharing of information between the Danube countries. This is of great importance as a major tool to prevent damages in downstream countries from upstream accidents and increasing flood events. It is key that downstream countries have enough time to shut down and protect water supply systems that are linked to the Danube, especially in the case of industrial accidents involving hazardous substances.

Serbia is particularly interested in ensuring that non-European Union countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and Ukraine become fully integrated into the work of the ICPDR. The assimilation of Montenegro, which will ratify the Danube River Protection Convention this year, is also of great importance.

Other key initiatives in 2008 focus on the dissemination of the results of the Joint Danube Survey 2, a six-week scientific survey of the Danube and its main tributaries carried out by the ICPDR in mid-2007. “I will try to ensure that the information on the current status of the Danube is spread widely,” says Mr. Dragin. “This will ensure public support for more national funds spending on wastewater systems and treatment plants.”

The ICPDR Presidency rotates annually among the Contracting Parties of the Danube River Protection Convention. Serbia will be succeeded by Slovakia in 2009.

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*The ICPDR (International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River) is an international organization consisting of 13 cooperating states and the European Union. Since its establishment in 1998, it has grown into one of the largest and most active international bodies engaged in river basin management in Europe. Its activities relate not only to the Danube River, but also the tributaries and ground water resources of the entire Danube River Basin.*

*The ultimate goal of the ICPDR is to implement the Danube River Protection Convention by promoting and coordinating sustainable and equitable water management, including conservation, and improvement and rational use of waters for the benefit of the Danube River Basin countries and their people.*

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