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## **16 Danube and Black Sea Countries Adopt Water Protection Declaration**

**VIENNA, 23 February (UN Information Service)** -- The European Commission and Environment Ministers from all 16 countries sharing the Danube River Basin and Black Sea region today adopted a new *Declaration on the Enhancement of Cooperation* during a High Level Meeting in Bucharest, Romania.

The 16 countries are Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey and Ukraine. Each country is a party to one or both of the protection conventions already in existence, the Danube River Protection Convention and Black Sea Protection Convention.

“On January 1, the Black Sea became a European Union sea,” said Sulfina Barbu, Romanian Minister of Environment and Water Management. “On this date, my country also joined the EU and it took over the Presidency of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR). As both a Danube and Black Sea country, Romania is proud to host this important meeting that is needed to increase cooperation among our countries for the challenging work that lies ahead for all of us.”

The Declaration recognizes the important values of the Danube/Black Sea region, the historical damage that it has undergone and recent signs of environmental recovery as a result of cooperative actions. At the same time, more cooperation and efforts are required by all 16 countries and the EU to improve the environment.

One key challenge is for the Danube countries to meet the requirements of the legally binding EU Water Framework Directive by 2015. “The Declaration clearly states that Danube countries are aware of the huge financial resources needed to meet this EU directive through the implementation of a joint programme of measures,” said ICPDR Executive Secretary Philip Weller. “Increased coordination between all countries will be crucial to reducing costs.”

One highlight of the declaration is the need to develop measures to reduce nutrient pollution of the Black Sea. “The entire Danube Basin is a ‘sensitive area’ under the EU Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive,” said Peter Gammeltoft, Head of the Water &

Marine Unit of the EU's Directorate-General, Environment. "This means that EU Member States must use advanced urban waste water treatment."

"The nutrient pollution problem is far from over," said Ivan Zavadsky, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/Global Environment Facility (GEF) Danube/Black Sea Regional Programme Director. "We have been working for over 15 years to better understand the problem and come up with solutions. Now is the time for concerted action for basin-wide measures such as municipal waste water treatment upgrades and introducing phosphate-free laundry detergents."

The Danube Regional Project (DRP) was the last major intervention of UNDP/GEF in the Danube Basin. The High Level Meeting in Bucharest followed a two-day Final Seminar where the DRP's main achievements and suggestions for the future were presented.

The Declaration also confirmed a strong commitment among all signatories to implement the ICPDR's Action Programme for Sustainable Flood Protection in the Danube River Basin, given the risks stemming from floods and accidental pollution, which often leads to massive damage and loss.

"What happened in the Danube Basin over the last 15 years is a model of success for rivers throughout the world," said Ahmet Kideys, Executive Director of the Black Sea Commission Permanent Secretariat. "The Danube countries, UNDP/GEF and the EU were able to pool their resources together in a way that will significantly improve water management, water quality and ecosystem health. Now that the Black Sea is an EU sea, we are confident that many of the Danube's successes will be repeated through the concerted efforts of the Black Sea countries, Black Sea Commission, EU and UNDP/GEF, supported by this new declaration signed today."

## **Notes to Editors:**

**What is the Danube Regional Project?** The overall goal of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Danube Regional Project (DRP) is to improve the environment of the Danube River Basin, protect its waters and sustainably manage its natural resources. The DRP helps 13 Danube countries implement the Danube River Protection Convention primarily through reducing nutrient and toxic pollution and strengthening trans-boundary cooperation in the most international river basin in the world. Through its partnerships with governments, industry, NGOs and local communities, the DRP provides technical and financial support.

**What is the ICPDR?** 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.

### **What is the Black Sea Commission?**

In 1992 the six coastal countries of Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine signed the Bucharest Convention for the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution. The Black Sea Commission (BSC) is the body responsible for implementing the Convention, which provides the legal framework for regional cooperation and the actions needed to reduce pollution and protect the marine environment. The BSC plays an important role in promoting the collaboration between different partners working to protect the Black Sea environment – particularly the work of national governments, non-government organisations and other regional projects and organisations.

**‘15 Years of Managing the Danube River Basin: 1991 - 2006’:** This brochure presents the key political decisions related to building river basin management in the Danube Basin over 15 years, and their results; from developing a new convention and institutions to environmental progress. Lessons learned are presented with the hope of their transferability to other river basins, as is the Danube outlook for the next 15 years. The document shows how a clear win-win situation resulted between the UNDP/GEF, ICPDR, EU and the Danube countries. (Download the brochure at: [www.undp-drp.org](http://www.undp-drp.org))

### **For more information:**

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