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## **Slovenia Takes over Presidency of International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)**

### Improving water quality and combating effects of climate change among the priorities

VIENNA, 14 January (UN Information Service) – Slovenia takes over the Presidency of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) for the year 2010 at a ceremony held at the Permanent Mission of Slovakia to the United Nations (Vienna) today.

Mitja Bricelj, Secretary at the Slovene Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning will serve as President and guide the activities of the ICPDR. “The pressure on the resources of the rivers is increasing,” said Mr. Bricelj, “therefore, I am committed to promoting the role of the ICPDR as a forum for discussion – for the benefit of both the people and the environment.”

The most important political step in 2010 will be the adoption of the Danube River Basin Management Plan, which outlines a set of measures to improve the water quality in the Danube River over a period of five years. The Plan is a major step towards the implementation of the European Union Water Framework Directive, which aims to achieve good water quality within the European Union by 2015. The Slovene ICPDR Presidency will convene a Ministerial Meeting on 16 February 2010 in Vienna, at which all ministers responsible for the water management in the Danube basin will adopt the Danube River Basin Management Plan. “This plan is a historic achievement, because it was established in a democratic manner in the most international river basin in the world – involving EU and non-EU countries,” Mr. Bricelj states. “At present all parties speak the same language through sharing a common vision for the Danube Basin, which we all are part of.”

The Danube River Basin Management Plan forms the framework for other important activities in 2010, such as the development of a strategy to reduce the negative impact of climate change on the Danube Basin. Of importance will also be the EU Danube Strategy, which will be developed under the leadership of the European Commission, with the goal of ensuring socio-economic development of the region without jeopardizing the ecological values for the future. It will be the task of the ICPDR to ensure that sustainable management of the Danube and its tributaries is taken into account. The ongoing dialogue at national, regional and international level will be key to all developments. “We are faced with the concrete challenge of a development opportunity, but we need to create new synergies and partnerships for a more efficient management of water resources - for better quality of life in the Danube Basin,” Mr. Bricelj concludes.

The ICPDR Presidency rotates annually among the Contracting Parties of the Danube River Protection Convention. Slovenia follows Slovakia and will be succeeded by Ukraine in 2011.

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For further information, contact:

**Jasmine Bachmann**  
ICPDR Secretariat at UNOV  
E-mail: [jasmine.bachmann@unvienna.org](mailto:jasmine.bachmann@unvienna.org)  
Mobile: (+43-676) 845 200 220  
Website: [www.icpdr.org](http://www.icpdr.org)