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## **EU Takes over the Presidency of the International Commission For the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)**

VIENNA, 23 January (UN Information Service) -- Today the European Union (EU) is taking over the Presidency of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) for the year 2004.

Catherine Day, Director-General, Directorate General Environment, European Commission, will serve as the President during this year, and will be responsible for all ICPDR activities. "During my presidency I am committed to work jointly with the Danube Basin countries to continue to reduce the pollution of the river, and to promote development, which meets the hopes of the people and the needs of the nature", said Ms. Day.

The EU is particularly pleased to hold the ICPDR Presidency in the year of the EU enlargement as four countries of the Danube Basin -- the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia -- will join the EU on 1 May. Ms. Day is convinced that this enlargement is an important step towards the European integration process. "In addition, I as the President will work hard to ensure that countries such as Serbia-Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldova and Ukraine are fully engaged in the Danube cooperation in the frame of the ICPDR", she emphasized.

Despite the different political situations in traditional and new EU Member States, applicant countries and other European countries, all of the Danube Basin Countries are committed to implement the EU Water Framework Directive. Water managers and experts from all over the river basin are working toward the goal to achieve "good water quality by 2015" as required by the Directive.

This year will be an important year for the Danube Basin Countries. It marks the tenth anniversary of the Danube River Protection Convention, the legal basis for the international cooperation in water management. On this occasion, the ICPDR will launch the celebration of the Danube Day on 29 June.

A Ministerial Meeting is also planned for the end of 2004. At the meeting the first report on the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive will be officially adopted by the Ministers of Water Management. The report will then be handed to the EU Commission.

The ICPDR Presidency rotates annually among the Contracting Parties of the Danube River Protection Convention. The EU follows Germany and will be succeeded by Hungary in 2005.

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