

NEW EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE DANUBE RIVER (ICPDR)

VIENNA, 20 August, (UN Information Service) -- Philip Weller was appointed the new Executive Secretary of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) on 1 August 2003.

As the new Executive Secretary of the ICPDR, Mr. Weller believes his main challenge will be to strengthen cooperation between Danube River Basin countries to reduce pollution thereby ensuring better water quality. This task, he has asserted, will be greatly facilitated by innovative EU water management legislation, called the EU Water Framework Directive, which guides the ICPDR's work. Even non-EU member countries in the Danube River Basin have committed themselves to implementing this Directive which calls for achieving a sound ecological status for all rivers in the European Union by 2015. Mr. Weller also wants to establish mechanisms for effective multilateral river basin management.

An environmental planner, Mr. Weller studied Environmental Science at the University of Waterloo, Canada, where he received a Masters in Urban and Regional Planning. As Director of the Worldwide Fund for Nature's Danube Carpathian Programme, 1995-2002, Mr. Weller was the driving force behind the "Lower Danube Green Corridor Agreement," an accord between Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova and the Ukraine to establish the largest wetland protection and restoration initiative in Europe.

Previously, he served for four years as director of Great Lakes United, a unique bi-national coalition of interest groups that included local municipalities, research organizations, businesses and NGOs in both Canada and the U.S., and which focused on cleaning-up the Great Lakes. Mr. Weller has also managed successful consulting businesses in both Canada and Austria, and undertaken numerous assignments for governments and international organizations.

Mr. Weller has considerable practical experience in the restoration of natural ecosystems, and in promoting public involvement in environmental decision-making. In February 2000, he was appointed a member of the Baia Mare Taskforce, an EU initiative by Margot Wallström, EU Commissioner for the Environment, whose task was to follow up the cyanide spill from a gold mine in Baia Mare in Romania. He also played a major role in the organization of the Danube Carpathian Heads of State Summit held in April 2001.

Mr. Weller is the author of three books on environmental topics including *Freshwater Seas*, an environmental history of the North American Great Lakes.

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