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Ministers agree on Danube Declaration

Ministers Responsible for Water Resources Management in the Danube River Basin Meet for the First Time in Vienna

VIENNA, 13 December 2004 – The countries sharing the Danube River Basin¹ today endorsed a ‘Danube Declaration’, which expresses their commitment to further reinforce transboundary cooperation on sustainable water resource management within the Danube region. The Declaration was finalised at the first ministerial meeting of the Danube River Protection Convention, held today in Vienna.

In her opening statement, Catherine Day, President of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) and Director General for Environment of the European Commission, said *“the Ministerial Meeting should be used to evaluate the progress that had been made to improve the management and the quality of the Danube waters and, more importantly, to identify the strategies and actions necessary for addressing the challenges that remain.”*

At the beginning of the meeting, the delegation from Bosnia and Herzegovina announced that their country had recently adopted the ratification instrument to join the Danube River Protection Convention. Bosnia and Herzegovina is the last of the 13 signatory members to ratify the convention.

During the meeting, the Ministers and high representatives of the Danube countries reached a number of agreements, in particular:

The Danube Declaration, **“The Danube Basin – Rivers in the Heart of Europe”**, underlines the commitment of the respective countries to cooperate in identifying and implementing solutions for integrated and sustainable water resource management in the Danube River Basin. The Declaration also sets out the priorities, objectives and major actions for the 10 years ahead.

¹ Ministers and high political representatives responsible for water resources management from Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Serbia-Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine and the European Commission attended the meeting, which comes a decade after the signing of the Danube River Protection Convention in Sofia in 1994. The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) is responsible for implementing the Danube River Protection Convention. The Commission is dedicated to achieving sustainable and equitable water management, including the conservation of natural resources, and the rational use of surface and ground water in the Danube River Basin.

The completion of the **Danube Basin Analysis (or Roof Report 2004)** fulfills one of the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive. The report describes the main environmental problems in the Danube River Basin and reveals that if no action is taken the majority of water bodies may fail to achieve good status by 2015. Based on this report a cost-effective programme of measures will be developed in order to ensure that the objectives of the Water Framework Directive are met. This programme of measures will be included in the Danube River Basin Management Plan to be completed in 2009.

The **Action Programme for Sustainable Flood Protection** in the Danube River Basin was also adopted at the meeting. The Action Programme aims at achieving a long-term and sustainable approach for managing the risk of floods to protect human life and property, while at the same time encouraging conservation and the improvement of water related ecosystems. The action programme will now be implemented in the coming years.

In addition, a **Tisza Agreement**, specifying additional commitments to coordinate water quality and flood risk management in the Tisza River Basin, was signed by Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia and Ukraine.

Philip Weller, Executive Secretary of the ICPDR said *“the meeting reinforced the political commitment of all Danube countries to basin-wide solidarity in water management. This is the precondition for cooperation to protect and improve water resources in the most international river in the world”*.

For further information on the individual topics, please see the detailed fact sheets.

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