

Subject: Statement of the Danube and Black Sea countries ministers: Contribution Austria; Wilfried Schimon

Dear Madam Minister, Excellencies, dear Ladies and Gentlemen

My name is Wilfried Schimon. I am Director General representing my Minister Josef Pröll. Please allow me to forward his warmest regards and the best wishes to you all. To his entire regret he is not able to participate. The negotiations of the budget as well as for the staff for the next two years with the Minister of Finance have reached now a decisive phase. He therefore asks you for your kind understanding for this very particular situation and to accept his sincere apologies.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, Austria is host country for the International Commission for the Protection of the River Danube. Nearly all of our territory is located in the Danube catchment and draining into the Black Sea. This is why we feel a very particular commitment towards a better environment in the Danube River Basin and the Black Sea and this is also why we strongly support all efforts bringing us closer to this very objective.

Austria, together with all other countries of the Danube River Basin is committed to the goals of the Danube River Protection Convention as well as for the setting up of a river basin management plan until 2009. We have now entered the final phase of preparing the programme of measures.

Please allow me to address the outcome of the very comprehensive Danube Basin Analysis undertaken in line with the EU - Water Framework Directive and published as Roof Report 2004. The results have clearly shown that discharging into the Danube means impacting on the Danube Delta and the coastal Black Sea waters, and that both these areas are extremely sensitive and vulnerable with respect to nutrients, organic matter and hazardous substances. The conclusions we draw from the Austrian side are manifold:

- Firstly we have to continue our efforts by reducing discharges from point sources **as well as** stemming from agriculture. We are firmly convinced that measures addressing agriculture appropriately will be the really key for achieving our goals.
- Secondly if we want to achieve our goals we will have to take ambitious measures in the entire catchment area of the Danube River in a spirit of basin wide solidarity. The same has to take place in the entire catchment area of the Black Sea. We therefore fully support all efforts to intensify cooperation among the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River and the Black Sea Protection Commission, as well as to intensify the exchange of relevant information, studies and strategies.
- Our third conclusion we draw is that we firmly believe that we all have to develop new long term visions and goals with regard to water quality, fish

migration and flood protection. We also have to adapt to a new challenge, namely to the effects of climate change. What is even more important to us is conveying these goals to a wider public to get really broad support. To do this we will have to translate very complex and often very technical issues into a language which is understood by our citizens. Only if we succeed to obtain that broad support from stakeholders and the wider public we will gain the resources from international as well as national institutions we need for achieving a better environment in the Danube River basin and the Black Sea.

- Final conclusion we draw is that we need the long-term visions and goals as basis for a tailor made programme of measures. We have to be fully aware of that we may not meet all our objectives within the first integrated management plan for the River Danube, but with a clear long-term vision we will not run into a risk of losing our way.

We see the Declaration of this our High Level Meeting to be an important step and signal towards a better environment and a sound renewal of our initial commitments. We therefore fully support the declaration.

We from the Austrian side will continue to support activities like the Joint Danube Survey and all other activities bringing us closer to our ambitious objectives.

Coming to the end I want to take the opportunity to say a few words of thanks:

Although Austria did not belong to the circle of eligible Danube Countries benefiting from the UNDP Program we would like to express our warmest gratitude and satisfaction for the outstanding well coordinated and effective support provided by UNDP /GEF. The contributions received were decisive in order to arrive where we are now. With considerable regret we have now to say good bye to the Program; we wish further excellent success in its continuation focusing now on the Black Sea.

We also want to take the opportunity to express our warm thanks to all the organisations contributing to the success of our efforts in our region; in particular we want to thank the host country for this excellent conference as well as for steering the work under the Danube Convention, the Secretariat and the European Commission for their support to carry on with the huge work load we all share and all countries of the region for their really outstanding and constructive cooperation.

Thank you for your attention.