



**Statement by
H.E. Ms. Soknan Han Jung, United Nations Resident Coordinator and
UNDP Resident Representative, at the Ministerial Meeting of
Countries of the Danube River Basin and the Black Sea Region
Bucharest, 23 February 2007**

Minister Barbu, Your Excellencies, distinguished participants,

I am pleased to be here with you to speak on behalf of Mr. Kemal Dervis, the Administrator of United Nations Development Programme.

First of all, I wish to congratulate the Romanian Government for the leadership in assuming the 2007 Presidency of ICPDR, and wish every success in its work.

This meeting signifies yet another cooperative effort aimed at addressing environmental challenges shared by the countries of the Danube and the Black Sea region. The Black Sea environmental issues also transcend the boundaries of the coastal states, bringing in the European Union, UNDP and other international partners.

UNDP is recognized worldwide for its experience in capacity-building, knowledge transfer and fostering stakeholder involvement. Together with the European Commission, GEF and other donors, UNDP has provided targeted assistance to the Danube and Black Sea countries. We addressed their need for policy reforms and strengthened their implementation capacity for management of international waters and biodiversity areas. In fact, the Danube Basin served as the site of the first International Waters regional programme ever funded by GEF and implemented by UNDP.

Since 1992, the Danube/Black Sea area has been the site of one of the GEF's largest and perhaps most ambitious water-related projects in the world. UNDP has been implementing the project on "GEF Strategic Partnership for Nutrient Reduction in the Danube/Black Sea Basin." The project aims at reducing the levels of nutrients and other hazardous substances, leading to recovery of the Black Sea ecosystem conditions similar to those of the 1960s. The Partnership seeks to put sustainable governance and investment frameworks in place, in order to prevent ecosystem deterioration due to the rapid economic development in the region. Under this Partnership, UNDP has implemented two regional projects to assist the Danube and Black Sea countries.

As a final phase of GEF/UNDP support, the 5-year Danube Basin Regional Project, was designed to strengthen the capacity of ICPDR and the Danube countries, facilitating fulfilment of their commitments assumed through the Danube Convention and the EU Water Framework Directive. Reduction of nutrient pollution was especially important, as it remained a serious challenge in terms of the requirements of the Water Framework Directive. At the local level, in addition to the Danube Small Grants Program, pilot projects were implemented, leading to numerous improvements, such as awareness-raising and strengthening public and NGO participation.

In order to raise awareness on the issues confronting the Danube, and encourage public participation, special attention has been given to reinforcing the Danube Environmental Forum (DEF), created under UNDP/GEF interventions. Today, the Forum has become the largest network of NGOs in the basin, uniting 174 member organisations and national focal points from 13 Danube countries.

Lessons learned from all these initiatives are transferable to other river basins worldwide. EU highlighted the Danube Regional Project as a model for cross-border water governance in its report to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. To build on the results of the project, a concerted regional effort is necessary, producing a realistic follow-up action plan.

The UNDP/GEF support played a catalytic role in the implementation of the Black Sea Strategic Action Plan, the first comprehensive policy document adopted by all the Black Sea countries. The Plan aims at dealing with pollution from land-based sources, instituting sound management of living resources and reversing the degradation of Black Sea ecosystems. Through capacity-building and knowledge transfer programmes, the UNDP/GEF projects helped establish a comprehensive regional monitoring and assessment programme, and expand the scientific and analytical basis for policy development.

UNDP and GEF have worked towards building-up the institutional capacity of the Black Sea Commission. It has provided assistance and development programmes aimed at achieving full sustainability and functioning of the Commission's institutional framework at national level. Emphasis was placed on strengthening public involvement in environmental decision-making and increasing awareness on Black Sea environmental challenges and potential solutions.

After 15 years of successful involvement in the Black Sea regional environmental programme, UNDP/GEF are about to phase out their activities. The current revision of the Black Sea Strategic Action Plan, carried out in close cooperation with the Black Sea Commission and the EC, provides an excellent opportunity to lay a foundation for future efforts. The Action Plan should be shaped in line with the objectives of the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution, taking the most recent EU policies, regulations and global conventions into account.

The EC assistance has been essential for GEF programme progress. The EU processes became a driving force behind the improvement of the environmental performance of the Danube River basin countries. Legal, policy and institutional reforms were facilitated and cross-border nutrient pollution reduction strategies were mainstreamed into national strategies and action plans.

UNDP has also been making efforts to strengthen partnerships with the private sector. One such example is the recently launched partnership with Coca-Cola "Every Drop Matters", which also covers a substantial part of the Danube/Black Sea region.

It is important to broadly disseminate and use the results of the UNDP/GEF Danube Regional and Black Sea Ecosystem Recovery Projects. In order to further advance the important progress that has been made and to use the UNDP/GEF intervention in the Danube/Black Sea region as a model for others, cooperation between all the involved countries must be ensured.

Looking into the future, a number of programming opportunities still remain for GEF support in the Danube/Black Sea basin. These include:

- the recently prepared Medium-Sized Project for the Tisza River basin; (applying a GEF 'enabling' (TDA/SAP) approach to one of the Danube's major sub-basins);
- ongoing GEF-supported regional policy, legal and institutional reform processes in the Dnipro River basin (probably the second largest pollution source to the Black Sea after the Danube);
- a proposed 'eastward' looking replication and upscaling of the highly successful Danube TEST project (Transfer of Environmentally Sustainable Technologies); and
- a recently prepared GEF Medium-Sized Project to harvest, codify, disseminate and promote replication of the wide range of technical, policy, institutional, investment and other lessons and good practices which GEF and other interventions in the Danube have generated.

The GEF also seeks to replicate the community level successes of the Danube, promoting application of basin level Small Grants Programmes in other GEF river basin projects.

Lastly, the GEF has on several occasions expressed interest and willingness to support investigation and possible application by Danube River basin countries of innovative economic instruments to addressing nutrient pollution, through cap and trade approaches to nutrient emissions as have been applied successfully in some other parts of the world.

Thank you.