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## **Hungary Takes over the Presidency of the International Commission For the Protection of the Danube River**

VIENNA, 18 January (UN Information Service) -- Today, Hungary will take over the Presidency of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) for the year 2005 from the European Union.

State Secretary of the Hungarian Ministry of Environment and Water, Istvan Öri, will serve as President during this year, and will guide the activities of ICPDR. "The ICPDR is an important catalyst for cooperation in the Danube river basin. I am committed to further encouraging the individual countries involved and strengthening cooperation between neighbours during my term. Special attention will be paid to offering tangible support to countries of the Danube River Basin which are not members of the European Union", said Mr. Öri.

After the ICPDR Ministerial Meeting in Vienna, Austria, in December 2004, the organization strongly encouraged the Danube countries to follow up on their political commitments, especially with regard to the implementation of the European Union Water Framework Directive in the Danube river basin. ICPDR is also working on the implementation of the Flood Action Programme adopted at the Ministerial Meeting. The Programme aims at achieving a long term and sustainable approach to flood-management, in order to minimize the risk to human life and property, while simultaneously encouraging conservation and improvement of water-related ecosystems. "The Flood Action Programme was the international response to the floods along the Danube and its tributaries in summer 2002 and it is expected that the countries take specific actions to implement it at the sub-basin level", said Philip Weller, Executive Secretary, ICPDR.

"The Hungarian Presidency wishes to ensure successful continuation of the initiative of the European Union concerning Tisza river basin cooperation development, in line with the related Memorandum of Understanding signed by the countries concerned during the Ministerial Meeting. It is also intended that the Budapest Danube Navigation Commission and the ICPDR establish closer cooperation to address the environmental aspects of transport activities on the Danube," said Mr. Öri.

An important event planned for 2005 is the commemoration of Danube Day on 29 June, when the countries of the Danube River Basin will join in the celebration of the most international river basin in the world to further build "Danube solidarity".

The ICPDR Presidency rotates annually among the contracting parties of the Danube River Protection Convention. Hungary will be succeeded by Moldova in 2006. The contracting parties include Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine and the European Union.

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The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) is an international organization of 13 cooperating states and the European Union. Since its establishment in 1998, ICPDR has grown into one of the largest and most active international bodies of river basin management experts in Europe. ICPDR deals not only with the Danube itself, but with the whole Danube river basin, which includes also its tributaries and the ground water resources.

The ultimate goal of the ICPDR is to implement the Danube River Protection Convention (DRPC)

and make it a living tool. Its ambitious mission is to promote and coordinate sustainable and equitable water management, including conservation, improvement and rational use of waters for the benefit of the Danube river basin countries and their people. The ICPDR pursues its mission by making recommendations for the improvement of water quality, developing mechanisms for flood and accident control, agreeing standards for emissions and by assuring that these are reflected in the Contracting Parties' national legislations and applied in their policies.

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