

## **Submittal for Oral Presentation**

### **International Cooperation in the Danube River Basin**

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International cooperation in the Danube River Basin has had a long history. This cooperation has seen the countries of the Danube River Basin sharing information between the different countries and stakeholders, establishment of an international protection commission (ICPDR), involvement of a number of international donors, most notably the UNDP-GEF and European Commission, that have all worked together to implement the first stages of the EU Water Framework Directive across all countries of the basin – EU members and non-members.

This presentation focuses on the significant achievements of the Danube countries under the legislative framework of the European Union through the coordination of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) with support from UNDP-GEF. The findings of the Danube River Basin District Analysis and the basic scheme of the follow management will be illustrated.

The Danube River Basin is the geographical catchment of the second largest river in Europe. It has played in the past and it still plays today an important role as a cultural and historical centre for the political, social and economic development in Central and South-Eastern Europe – including the ongoing enlargement of the European Union.

The Danube River is 2,780km long and drains 817,000km<sup>2</sup>; nearly 10% of the total surface of the European Continent and the basin is home to more than 80 million people. Numerous large rivers are the tributaries of the Danube - in particular in its middle part, where the Drava, the Tisza and the Sava double the water volume of the main river, before their water finally joins with the waters of the Black Sea. The basin area includes all of Hungary; nearly all parts of Austria, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Serbia and Montenegro; significant parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Moldova and small parts of Germany and Ukraine. Five more countries make part of the Danube basin, but their areas are smaller than 2,000 km<sup>2</sup>. This makes it the world's most international river.

The Danube basin has been under significant environmental pressures from industry, agriculture and municipalities that are compounded by the large differences in GDP between the upstream and downstream countries. The Danube River Protection Convention was developed to respond to these international issues and came into force in 1998. The objectives of the Convention are achieved through the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River Basin (ICPDR) and its developed coordination mechanisms between the Danube countries.

The economic and environmental problems of the former communist countries in the Danube Basin are well known. To address these issues a range of programmes were initiated in the early 1990's to assist with restructuring institutions and reconstructing environmental protection systems. The European Commission and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), through UNDP, funded the most significant of these

programmes. After 15 years of support the final UNDP-GEF intervention is being completed under the Danube Regional Programme (DRP).

Under the coordination of the ICPDR the countries have developed a range of tools to enable the more effective management within the basin. These include the trans-national monitoring network which enables comparable water quality/quantity data to be collected and analysed, the operation of an accident emergency warning system, the preparation of databases of emissions to the river, the development of flood action plans, etc.

In 2000 the Danube countries requested that the ICPDR should put the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) at the top of the Danube River Basin management. The fact that all countries of the basin requested this – EU members, accession countries and non-accession countries – indicates the recognised importance and benefits of this key water legislation.

A key achievement in the implementation of the Water Framework Directive has been the preparation of the ‘Danube River Basin District Analysis’ that performed the characterisation of surface waters and groundwater within the DRB, identified the major pressures/impacts and those water bodies which are at risk of failing the Water Framework Directive’s objectives. The UNDP-GEF Danube Regional Project has provided significant support to the ICPDR and the Danube countries through a range of workshops, technical experts and other support activities in preparing this report. The report highlighted a number of important challenges for the future river basin management plan that – according to the implementation of the Directive – has to be finished by the end of 2009. Four key water management issues will be addressed in the Danube River Basin Management Plan: organic pollution, nutrients, hazardous substances and hydromorphological alterations. All these issues contribute to the risk of failing to meet the Water Framework Directive objectives in certain water bodies and efficient measures have to be developed to reach the good ecological status of

The challenges for the ICPDR and the Danube countries in addressing these issues are significant; both in terms of the financial resources required and the need for technical support. In the last year of the UNDP-GEF Danube Regional Project attention is being directed at addressing the gaps in information – particularly in the non-EU countries and supporting the ICPDR with its development as a sustainable platform for the management of the most international river basin in the world.

### **Biographies**

**Birgit Vogel** has a MSc degree in Applied Hydrobiology and Water Management and has been involved in technical work related to the Danube River Basin for several years. Currently, she is working for the ICPDR in the field of WFD implementation and Danube River Basin Management.

**Peter Whalley** has a PhD in physical chemistry and is the Environmental Specialist on the DRP. He has been involved in the Danube River Basin since 1993 and worked with national experts to develop the trans-national monitoring network.