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Romania to Take Over Presidency of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River

VIENNA, 19 January (UN Information Service) -- Romania will take over the Presidency of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) for the year 2007, on Monday, 22 January. The handover will take place at an official ceremony hosted by the outgoing Presidency, Moldova, at the Palais Pallavicini in Vienna, Austria, at 1700 hours.

State Secretary of Environment and Water Management of Romania, Lucia Varga, will serve as President during 2007 and will guide the activities of ICPDR, which was set up to coordinate the protection and improvement of the Danube and its tributaries. "As the person responsible for flood management in Romania, I know the difficulties in meeting the hopes of the population, and the needs of nature", said Ms. Varga.

As President, Ms. Varga will emphasize the need for cooperation between the Danube and Black Sea countries. This is of great importance since along with Bulgaria and Romania, the Black Sea has become part of the EU this year. Additionally, all tributaries and branches of the Danube empty into the Black Sea. Despite the fact that the quality of the water in the Black Sea has improved over the last two decades, the threat of increased use of pesticides and fertilizers in agriculture and further industrialization could increase the pollution load again, leading to problems with water supplies, fish and other forms of aquatic life, and tourism.

Romania is particularly interested in ensuring that non-European Union countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and Ukraine are also fully integrated into the work of the ICPDR. The assimilation of Montenegro, which, it is hoped, will ratify the Danube River Protection Convention this year is also of great importance.

Other key initiatives in 2007 focus on strengthened cooperation with the business sector. "I will also work hard to ensure that there is a good basis for discussion and cooperation with representatives from various businesses and industries. It is high time that those using the water and those managing our resources began working together more closely," emphasized Ms. Varga.

The ICPDR Presidency rotates annually among the Contracting Parties of the Danube River Protection Convention. Romania will be succeeded by Serbia in 2008.

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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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