

Statement on behalf of Mr. Jaroslav Izak, Minister of the Environment of the Slovak Republic at the ICPDR Ministerial Meeting in Bucharest on 23 February 2007

Dear Mr. Prime Minister,

Dear Ministers, ladies and gentlemen!

First of all I would like to thank as the Minister of environment of the Slovak Republic for invitation to this meeting of ministers, responsible for water management in the frame of the Convention on Co-operation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the River Danube (Danube River Protection Convention).

The Convention came into force in 1998 and I am very glad and proud that Slovak Republic is one of the parties, who supported and ratified this convention and of course fulfilling the obligations resulting from the convention.

Secondly I would like to express my gladness and congratulations to Romania and Bulgaria for their accession to the family of the European Union countries, while Romania moreover took the Presidency in frame of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) for this year.

At the same time I wish them both success and patience in the process of accession to the European Union structures and on behalf of the Slovak Republic I express willingness in supporting, help and co-operation to Romania and Bulgaria in this process, as well as in the process of implementation of European legislation into national, in which Slovak Republic has some useful experiences.

Hereby I would like to point out the fact, that by the accession of these two countries into the European Union the borders go now directly to the Black Sea. This does not mean that Slovak Republic is not concerned, but on the contrary we are fully aware of higher responsibility of fulfilling and meeting the obligations and objectives of the Convention, as well as other relevant international legally binding documents in the field of water management and environmental protection.

In relation to this I would like to underline the needfulness, importance and necessity of implementation of the Water Framework Directive in whole Danube River basin and development of common Danube River Basin Management Plan according to the defined time schedule, as well as realization of the adopted Action Programme for sustainable flood prevention in the Danube River Basin and development of draft action plans for sub-basins.

I can happily inform, that the Slovak Republic is on the right way to fulfill these objectives and obligations according to the time schedule also to excellent co-operation with neighboring countries, Danube river basin countries and EU member countries as well.

Regarding the new fact that Romania and Bulgaria have accessed to the European Union, Slovak Republic is ready to support the activities in the field of environmental protection of the Danube river basin and the Black Sea region by promoting new activities for the sustainable development in the context of Danube River Protection Convention and Black Sea Convention and Water Framework Directive implementation by reduction of risks of pollution and by improvement of water quality of the Danube river and its tributaries.

Slovakia will promote the integration of regional priorities into national programmes and facilitate the co-ordinated and efficient use of financial instruments at national, EU and international level in particular by providing a comprehensive and integrated vision of the priorities for environmental investments directed towards protection of the water environment, in the field of water quality, flood protection and land protection. Here I can present as a good example active participation of Slovakia in organization of the second Joint Danube Survey in 2007, results and contribution of the UNDP/GEF Danube regional project.

Special attention we want and will focus to close co-operation in prevention and mitigation of pollution accidents including timely distribution of warning information via the Danube Accident Emergency Warning System.

I would like to mention about new EU Directive on the assessment and management of floods, which is currently in the process of approval in the European Parliament. Slovakia has been taking an active role in preparation of this Directive and is ready after its approval in relevant institutions of the European Union for implementation of the flood directive into national legislation. I await that in the process of implementation a close co-operation between EU member states will be needed.

At the end of my speech I would like to thank once more for the possibility to take part on this important and high level meeting, for the conditions during the meeting and for the hospitality as well. At the same time I express the support of the Slovak Republic to the Declaration of the Ministers in charge of water management of the contracting parties to the Danube River Protection Convention and the Convention for Protection of the Black against pollution on the enhancement of co-operation. I hope that conclusions and ideas of this Declaration will be implemented and realized and that co-operation between Danube River Basin countries and EU member states will be even better as till now.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for your attention.