

# Towards a River Basin Management Plan for the Tisza river supporting sustainable development of the region

## Memorandum of Understanding

On the basis of the outlined related earlier activities and objectives indicated in the Annex and encouraged by a dialogue initiated by the EU Presidency of the International Commission for the Protection of the River Danube (ICPDR), the countries sharing the Tisza River Basin, Republic of Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia Republic, and Ukraine (subsequently called the Tisza countries), on the occasion of the 1<sup>st</sup> ministerial meeting of the ICPDR held in Vienna on 13 December 2004 agree on the following:

### The Tisza countries

- *ARE COMMITTED towards an international integrated Tisza River Basin cooperation development – in line with the objectives and provisions of the relevant international and regional environmental obligations, conventions and programmes, including EU policies – supporting sustainable development in the region;*
- *AGREE to co-operate more closely in the framework of the ICPDR in order to produce a Tisza River Basin Management Plan by 2009 aiming at the objectives set by the EU Water Framework Directive as implemented through the Danube River Protection Convention and the ICPDR Flood action Programme and thereby complementing the efforts of the ICPDR, the bilateral co-ordination and the national level;*
- *AGREE to start immediately, as a first step, with the preparation of a Tisza Analysis Report with the aim to present it to the ICPDR Ordinary Meeting in 2006. Such a report shall include, inter alia, aspects on water quality, review of human activities and water uses, water quantity and flood risk management;*
- *WELCOME the intentions of the European Commission to facilitate this process;*

- *WELCOME the intentions of UNDP GEF to actively support this initiative by launching a new Tisza project whose activities would be closely co-ordinated with the ICPDR and the competent authorities of the countries and strengthen the Tisza countries in their activities to achieve sustainable river basin management;*
- *INVITE the ICPDR to express their support to this initiative and take the necessary steps to ensure that this initiative is fully embedded in the ICPDR, in particular, by setting up an appropriate group and allowing this initiative to use structures and mechanisms of the ICPDR.*

Done in Vienna on 13<sup>th</sup> day of December 2004.

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István Óri – Permanent State Secretary  
Ministry of Environment and Water  
Republic of Hungary

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Liliana Bara – State Secretary  
Ministry of Environment and Waters Management  
Romania

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Ivana Dulić - Marković – Minister  
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management  
Republic of Serbia  
Serbia and Montenegro

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Peter Stanko – State Secretary  
Ministry of the Environment  
Slovak Republic

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Vyacheslav Kruk – First Deputy Minister  
Ministry for Environment Protection  
Ukraine

## ANNEX

1. The Tisza countries are committed to an international integrated Tisza River Basin cooperation under the umbrella of the ICPDR. It should be built on and developed taking into account the achievements and experiences of existing relevant activities as well as earlier international initiatives in this area, especially regarding environmental protection and flood control.
2. The Tisza countries welcome the initiative „Towards a Sub-basin Management Plan for the Tisza River” of the EU, initiated by the ICPDR Presidency in 2004, and are ready to actively participate in its further development and realisation as outlined in the minutes of the related consultation held in Bucharest (15 July 2004).
3. We are strongly interested in a well established Tisza River Basin cooperation which – focusing on specific common interests - integrates national activities and bilateral activities in line with the Danube River Basin level cooperation.
4. In this context we emphasize the necessity of sub-basin approach in the WFD implementation process for the Tisza River Basin.
5. The challenge is to establish effective cooperation supporting sustainable development in the Tisza River Basin - the largest sub-basin of the Danube catchment – which is shared by five countries with specific economic and social conditions.
6. We fully agree with the outlined integrative approach, that in line with the relevant EU policies and the provisions of the Danube River Protection Convention to step-by-step develop:
  - coordinated river basin management planning;
  - measures for protection and sustainable use of water resources;
  - harmonised flood management:
    - measures for reduction of environmental risks, prevention of transboundary pollution, increase of environmental safety;
    - provide good quality of life all of the people living in that large region of the Tisza River Basin.
7. We appreciate the readiness of the EU and ICPDR to take part in launching and developing this process. The Tisza Dialogue initiated by the EU has to be continued with the involvement of all the riparian countries and the EU and the ICPDR.
8. We accept the proposal that at this developing phase the ICPDR provides framework for the Tisza cooperation development activities making use of existing structures. We would suggest to set up an ad hoc expert group for the work. In this process relevant initiatives and cooperation achievements (i.e. the Tisza River Basin Forum on Flood Control/Tisza Water Forum, the Tisza Environmental Program) should be taken into account. Proper cooperation, exchange of information and coherence of work should be ensured with the Tisza Water Forum. Better coordination and avoiding duplication should be ensured also with the other relevant

initiatives (i.a. the "Initiative on sustainable spatial development of the Tisza/Tisa River Basin"). To achieve this, establishment of suitable mechanisms is necessary.

9. Taking into account the specificities of the Tisza region, and the complexity of the tasks for the Tisza countries deriving from the EU and other obligations, establishment at a later stage of appropriate legal framework for the Tisza River Basin cooperation should be considered. When developing this, provisions of the relevant international legal instruments including ECE conventions and protocols as well as the multilateral regional agreements should be analysed and adopted.
10. Cooperation with partners being interested and active in the Tisza region (e.g. UNDP, GEF, FAO, UNEP) should be reinforced and with other potential international professional and financial institutions developed.
11. The EU has a significant role in the Tisza cooperation development. The relevant EU policies i.e. water policy, flood policy, cohesion policy, neighbourhood policy and related initiatives are extremely important and have implications to the Tisza River Basin, ensuring the region's benefit from the EU's enlargement. We consider as most relevant:
  - a) Realisation of EU policy conform
    - achievement of good status and sustainable use of water resources as well as protection of water related ecosystems in the Tisza River Basin (as required by the WFD)
    - WFD based river basin management planning in the Tisza River Basin,
    - sustainable flood management at Danube and Tisza basin levels, in line with the related activities in the Danube river basin.
  - b) Joint efforts to make use of EU funds, such as
    - EU pre-accession funds
    - EU regional funds (CBC, Interreg, LIFE etc.)
    - EU cohesion policy (accession to funds available for development support in eligible countries)
    - EU research funds (submission of joint projects)