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Slovakia Takes over Presidency of International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)

Improving water quality and developing flood action plans for tributaries among the priorities

VIENNA, 27 January (UN Information Service) – Slovakia takes over the Presidency of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) for the year 2009 at a ceremony held at the United Nations in Vienna today.

Olga Srsnova, General Director of the Division of Waters and Energy Sources at the Slovak Ministry of Environment will serve as President and guide the activities of the ICPDR. “During my presidency, I am committed to promoting development that meets the needs of both the people and the environment”, said Ms. Srsnova. She intends to support the role of the ICPDR as a forum for discussion, especially against a background of increasing pressure on river resources.

The Minister of the Environment of Slovakia Jan Chrbet will attend the handover ceremony, underscoring the importance of the Presidency for Slovakia.

Slovakia is particularly committed to support the timely and proper implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive. Water managers and experts throughout the Danube basin are working towards achieving good water quality by 2015 as required by the Directive. The coming months will be essential in developing the Danube River Basin Management Plan including the Joint Programme of Measures that must be completed by the end of 2009. The Presidency will host a Stakeholder Forum to discuss the measures to be adopted in Bratislava around the date of International Danube Day on 29 June 2009. “Discussing the planned measures, listening to those who will be affected by them, and finding compromises are key for the success of the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive,” Ms. Srsnova emphasized.

The final Danube River Basin Management Plan will be adopted by all ministers responsible for water management in spring 2010.

Additional focus will be given to the development of flood action plans for sub-basins. “Being regularly affected by floods, Slovakia is aware of the international dimension of this problem,” Ms. Srsnova underlined, “The flood damage along the Danube can be significantly reduced by a better flood management of its tributaries. The development of a flood action programme for the respective sub-basins is an important step to achieve this.”

The ICPDR Presidency rotates annually among the Contracting Parties of the Danube River Protection Convention. Slovakia follows Serbia and will be succeeded by Slovenia in 2010.

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