



Third meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, Madrid, 26-28 November 2003

Statement by Róbert RAKICS, Deputy State Secretary of Environment Ministry for Environment and Water, Hungary

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Three minutes are rather short to report in details on three years activities for a country like Hungary, which shares water resources with all of its seven neighbour countries, which is situated entirely on the Danube river basin and for which cooperation development on the Tisza river basin shared by five countries is equally important.

Taking these facts into account I don't think any explanation is needed to prove the vital importance for us of the Convention and its protocols.

Since the last meeting of the Parties Hungary has ratified the Water and Health Protocol, actively participated in the elaboration and signed the Civil Liability Protocol. We actively participated in all working groups holding the chairmanship in the Water and Health Working Group, co-chairmanship in the ad hoc joint "water and industrial accidents" expert group, vice chairmanship in the Monitoring and Assessment Working Group. Two pilot projects have been completed and one on groundwaters is still ongoing with Hungarian participation.

On the basis of the UNECE Water Convention, the Danube Convention and also the EU Water Framework Directive, Hungary initiated the upgrading of the existing transboundary agreements with its neighbours. The latest development is that an updated agreement was signed with Romania in September this year.

We can also report about some ongoing joint projects in Romanian-Hungarian relation aiming at water quality protection (contingency planning), hopefully followed by their further development towards joint river basin management on the shared river basins. Third countries assistance (from Finland, Norway, the Netherlands and in the future France) to these projects are highly appreciated.

Based on the results achieved so far, we fully support a strengthening cooperation between UNECE environmental conventions as well. To this end Hungary highly appreciates the achieved results of the joint water and industrial accidents expert group and looking forward to its further activities as well as to that of the interim implementation of the Civil Liability Protocol. We all know how high are the costs of the environmentally careless economic activities and why integration of environmental considerations into industrial activities as well as strong control are essential. Such sentences are often repeated as slogans, nevertheless sometimes only serious industrial accidents warns us and forces us to increase our level of responsibility at national level and to improve international cooperation.

We are also extremely interested and open towards the recent flood management related initiatives including ours, the Budapest initiative, the one of Germany under the umbrella of

the UNECE Water Convention and that of the Netherlands in line with the related EU processes.

At the end allow me to formulate some thoughts concerning the future activities.

In our view the experience and results of the previous years work under the umbrella of the UNECE Water Convention proved the necessity and usefulness of such networking also in the future. It is advisable to develop closer links between the bodies of the Convention and the river basin commissions as well in the UNECE region. We also call for further strengthening of the methodological, legal and advisory activities at the level of the Convention.

After the enlargement of the EU in May 2004, the Convention will continue its important role as a forum for dialog and exchange of experience between EU and non-EU countries in our region. Hungary is ready to share its knowledge and experience and to consider contribution to the initiatives addressing regions outside the enlarged EU.

Finally I wish to express our hope that the number of countries becoming Parties to the Convention will further increase in the near future, the Protocol on Water and Health will enter into force next year and the ratification of the Protocol on Civil liability will start by the signatories. We also stress the importance of compliance with and the enforcement of our legal documents by further improving the legislative, implementing and control mechanisms.

I wish to conclude my statement by expressing our thanks to the Secretariat and to the Bureau for the preparation of this meeting of the Parties and to the Government of Spain for hosting it.

Thank you for your kind attention!