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Dear Ms. Bernardini,

I am writing to you in connection with document ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2007 concerning the preliminary assessment of transboundary waters in the Mediterranean Sea Basin, as you aware, this document will be discussed at the Eighth Meeting of Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment that will be held from 25 to 27 June in Helsinki, in the context of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

In this regard, I would like to bring the following information concerning the Meriç/Evros/Maritza River Basin to your kind attention.

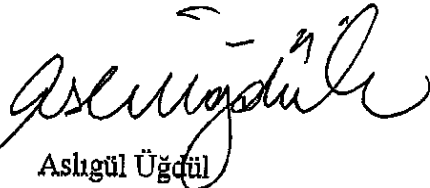
- The Meriç River originates from the Deliorman Mountains in Bulgaria and flows into Turkey. The Meriç River joins the Aegean Sea near the Turkish town of Enez, after it forms the border between Turkey and Greece. The area of the river basin in Bulgaria is 21,200 square kilometers constituting a water potential of 4,490 billion cubic meters per year at the border between Turkey and Bulgaria. Two main tributaries of the Meriç River, the Tunca and the Arda Rivers, also have their origins in Bulgaria. Their basin areas and water potentials, outside Turkish territories, are 7,800 square kilometers, 795 million cubic meters/year and 5,600 square kilometers and 1,259 billion cubicmeters/year, respectively. The Arda and Tunca Rivers join in Edirne, Turkey, and their total basin area becomes 35,300 square kilometers increasing their total average water potential to 6,541 billion cubic meters per year. There are also other water resources originating in Turkey and Greece. Therefore, the basin area becomes 28,906 square kilometers and the total average water potential is 2,647 billion cubic meters/year. Consequently, The Meriç River is one of the biggest rivers in the Balkan Peninsula, with a catchment area of 54,206 square kilometers and a total average water potential of 9,168 cubic meters per year.

- In light of these facts, the Turkish General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works (DSI), which is the competent governmental institution for the management of water resources in Turkey, is in agreement with the figures concerning the catchment area of the Meriç River Basin indicated in the above-mentioned document. However, the data concerning the discharge characteristics of the Meriç River Basin that are mentioned in the document are not in conformity with data registered by the DSI. In addition, the location of the monitoring stations from which the data on the discharge characteristics of the Meriç River Basin are acquired is not clearly indicated in the document. Therefore, it would be highly appropriate to revise these data by a Commission comprising of Turkish, Bulgarian and Greek experts.
- Turkey is the downstream country in the Meriç River Basin. Therefore, Turkey is highly vulnerable to the floods and droughts in the Basin. Edirne, a city that is very close to the border is in complete danger of flood.
- The climatic and geographical characteristics of Meriç and Tunca River Basins lead to specific run-off conditions, such as, flash floods, high inter-annual variability, as well as heavy soil erosion reducing the channel and reservoir capacities through sedimentation. Therefore, it is evident that improved measures for flood prevention and diminishing hazardous effects of floods can only be achieved through cooperation and use of common information sources.
- The floods of 2005 and 2006 have been the worst in 15 years. As a result of inundation, there was considerable damage to agricultural and residential areas.
- There are three sequential dams on the Arda River in Bulgaria. Despite the reservoirs and cascades on the Meriç, Tunca and Arda Rivers on Bulgarian territory, their retention capabilities are not sufficient to reduce or control downstream floods. Therefore, the operation principles of dams should cover the issue of leaving necessary dead volumes in their reservoirs so as to mitigate the effects of floods.
- Due to lack of retention/dead volume in the reservoirs of these dams, the spillway gates were opened in 2005 and 2006, resulting in the heavy floods in Edirne. Therefore, these dams should be operated in accordance with the correct precipitation data and conditions prevailing in the downstream country, in this case Turkey. In light of these facts, establishment of a "Flood Early Warning System" on the Arda River Basin is extremely essential.
- The dams should be operated in a coordinated manner among the riparian countries so that a minimum amount of 60 cubic meters which is required for irrigation can be obtained. Moreover, in order to take necessary measures during the drought season, the reservoir volumes should be jointly monitored between Turkey and Bulgaria. In addition, a "Coordination Committee" including the experts of the three riparian countries should be established for regular information sharing.
- In this context, it is of utmost importance that the operation of the Bulgarian dams should be realized by taking into account the conditions of water flow downstream. Setting up the Flood Forecasting and Early Warning System is foreseen as a necessary step for a sustainable and efficient solution to problems of floods in the Meriç River Basin. In this respect, Turkey and Bulgaria have developed a series of projects on flood forecasting and early warning systems in the context of the "Transboundary Cooperation Programme", joint work continues to date.

- The upstream region of the Meriç River is highly populated and industrialized. Therefore, the necessary steps for the prevention of pollution of the river have to be taken by the upstream countries.

Believing that the information mentioned above will be useful for the work of the Secretariat in its preparation for the Helsinki Convention regarding the Meriç River, I remain.

Yours sincerely,



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Deputy Permanent Representative

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