

**Opening Statement by Mr. Zdravko Krmek, State Secretary in the Ministry of Regional Development, Forestry and Water Management at the Fifth Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention, Geneva, 10-12 November 2009**

Mr/Ms Chairman/Chairwoman, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to welcome you on behalf of Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia and Minister of Regional Development, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Croatia, Mr. Božidar Pankretić. Minister regrets very much that he cannot participate in this conference himself and sends his regards and wishes you all a successful meeting.

The Republic of Croatia ratified the Water Convention on July 1996 as well as the Protocol on Water and Health on July 2006.

Regarding the bilateral cooperation the Republic of Croatia has a good cooperation with neighboring countries on transboundary issues, such as Hungary, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. We also have very fruitful cooperation with Bavaria within a framework of the Permanent Croatian-Bavarian Commission. We hope for a successful cooperation with the Republic of Serbia in the Water Management issues regarding the signing of the agreement between two countries.

Regarding the multilateral cooperation the Republic of Croatia is involved in the work of International Commissions such as International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC) and International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR). The International Sava River Basin Commission comprises 4 countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia). It has been established for the purpose of implementation of the Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin and realization of the mutually agreed goals such as the establishment of the international navigation regime on the Sava River and its navigable tributaries, establishment of the sustainable water management and undertaking of measures to prevent or limit hazards, such as floods, ice hazards, droughts and accidents involving substances hazardous to water, and to reduce or eliminate their adverse consequences. The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River comprises 15 Contracting Parties (Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia, Ukraine and the European Union). The legal basis for the international cooperation between these countries is the Danube River Protection Convention whose main goal is to ensure that surface waters and groundwater within the Danube River Basin are managed and used sustainable and equitable. The Republic of Croatia is also involved in the work of Trilateral Croatian-Slovenian-Italian Commission for the Adriatic and Union for the Mediterranean.

The Republic of Croatia also implemented provisions of the Water Convention as the Party of the Protocol for the protection of the Mediterranean sea against pollution from land-based sources and activities to the Convention for the protection of the marine environment and the coastal region of the Mediterranean.

Croatian Parliament adopted in 2008 the Water Management Strategy which represents a long-term planning document that sets out the vision, mission, targets and tasks of the Water

Management Governmental Policy. Its content is compliant with relevant EU Directives. The main objective of the Water Management in Croatia is an achievement of complete and harmonized water regime on state territory.

The Republic of Croatia is currently at the stage of EU accession negotiations, and in this regard in the phase of the harmonization of its legislation with EU legislation. Accordingly, the new Water Act and the new Water Management Financing Act are currently in Parliament Procedure and they are completely transposing the EU water legislation, first of all the EU Water Framework Directive. As the implementation of the Water Framework Directive is one of the current and future priorities of transboundary cooperation in European Union water policy, in this regard the Republic of Croatia has made significant progress.

Thank you very much for your attention.