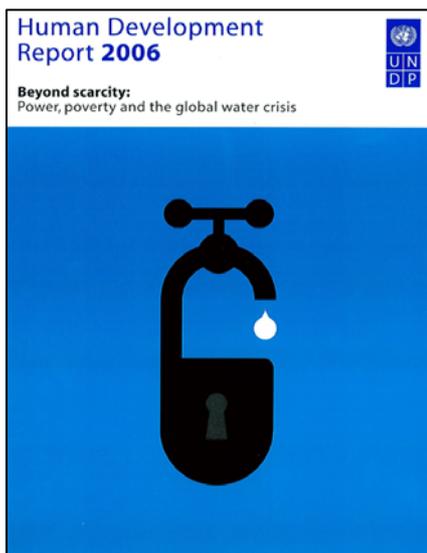


Global Water and Sanitation Crisis: GEF Small Grants Programme Conference hosts 2006 UNDP Human Development Report Launch in Romania

Bucharest, 23 Nov. - United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Romania launched the 2006 Human Development Report (HDR) entitled: "Beyond scarcity: power, poverty and the global water crisis" at a conference co-hosted with the Ministry of Environment and Water Management. The event integrated the water theme in a wide national and international context and reviewed the progress of the *Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme* in Romania.

This year's HDR aims at getting water and sanitation on the global agenda and highlights the fact that the crisis overwhelmingly affects the poor – almost two in three people lack access to clean water and more than 660 million people without sanitation live on less than \$2 a day. These issues are profoundly influencing the human potential and progress towards achieving Millennium Development Goals. In Romania, water resources are still unevenly distributed: while 92% of the urban population has access to safe water, only about 35% of the rural population does. Target 19 of Romania's MDG framework, therefore, is to reach 99% urban and 85% rural population to have access to safe drinking water by 2020. Contrary to the belief that Romania enjoys a relative abundance in water distribution, given its balanced hydrographic network, the water supply - estimated at 1700 m³ per inhabitant - is relatively low. Below this supply threshold, countries are considered to have a water deficit.

In her welcome remarks Ms. Soknan Han Jung, UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative, announced that: "Romania's HDI ranking improved to 60 in 2006 from 64 in 2005 and 69 in 2004. Romania has now joined the countries with High Human Development. I wish to congratulate Romania and its leadership for this significant progress".



From L to R: Ms. Mihaela Dupleac, SGP coordinator, Mr. Istvan Toke, State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, Ms. Soknan Han Jung, UN Ambassador, Ms. Sulfina Barbu, Minister of Environment and Water Management



GEF SGP projects on display

At the conference UNDP reviewed the achievements of its GEF-funded Small Grants Programme and celebrated 10 years of GEF support to Romania. The event hosted representatives of GEF Implementing Agencies such as UNEP, World Bank and UNDP, which were invited to present their GEF achievements to date. More than 100 members of the central and local administration, NGOs, private sector companies debated a wide variety of water and environmental issues at the conference.

"This is for the first time when both large and small GEF projects are brought together to celebrate Romania's work towards achieving sustainable development. In the last decade, the Government of Romania has worked in close partnership with World Bank, FAO, UNDP, UNIDO, UNEP, etc., and today we gathered here to build on this experience and share our knowledge", said Ms. Jung. In her key note address, Ms. Sulfina Barbu, Minister of Environment and Water Management, expressed her appreciation for the implementation of the GEF projects in Romania. "I believe that through these projects Romania actually contributes to environmental protection at a global scale, given the well-known dictum *Think globally, act locally*".

The Small Grants Programme showed that with small amounts of funding (maximum US\$50,000 per project) and through local initiatives, global environmental problems can be addressed adequately. So far, GEF SGP has financed 35 projects with a great impact on bio-diversity conservation, climate change reduction, international waters and persistent organic pollutants (POPs) reduction. The conference demonstrated that local initiatives and partnerships among local authorities, NGOs/CBOs, private sector, and educational institutions can efficiently mobilize resources and implement projects that contribute to the sustainable development of the country.