

## 15 years of UNDP-GEF Support for Cleaner Waters in the Danube/Black Sea Region

Bucharest, 23 February 2007. Countries in the Danube and Black Sea region are on the verge of record clean waters, due in part to groundbreaking efforts by 15 years of UNDP/GEF initiatives. Starting in 1992, UNDP/GEF has been working closely with the governments of all these countries to implement replicable models for reducing nutrient pollution and restoring nutrient sinks.

UNDP today took part in the *Ministerial Meeting Danube-Black Sea Towards a Sustainable Partnership for Integrated Water Management* under the aegis of Romania's President Traian Basescu. During the meeting Soknan Han Jung, UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative, shared her views with ministers and delegates from 16 countries from the Danube basin and the Black Sea region, GEF, World Bank, European Commission (EC), The European Bank for Reconstruction (EBRD), European Investment Bank (EBI), Council of Europe Development Bank (COE Bank)

Together with the World Bank and other donors, UNDP/GEF has provided 15 years of targeted assistance to the Danube and Black Sea countries. "We addressed their need for policy reforms and strengthened their implementation capacity for management of international waters and biodiversity areas," said Ms. Jung, adding that the GEF Strategic Partnership for Nutrient Reduction implemented by UNDP from 2001 to 2007 was worth US\$.95 million. This joint initiative led to significant improvements of the Black Sea ecosystem which will allow its recovery to conditions similar to 1960.



First row middle: Ms. Soknan Han Jung, UN RC/UNDP RR.



Behind the flag: Traian Basescu, President of Romania;  
at his left: Ms. Sulfina Barbu, Minister of Environment and Water Mgmt.

"The net result has clearly been a success – in the Danube Basin nitrogen emissions have decreased by 20% and phosphorus by almost 50% over the last 15 years," said Andrew Hudson, Principal Technical Advisor, International Waters UNDP-GEF.

The GEF decision to establish the Strategic Partnership complemented the on-going EU accession process and pooled together the necessary resources in order to improve water management, water quality and ecosystem health. "Romania appreciates the achievements and the input of the projects financed by UNDP/GEF in the region," said Ms. Sulfina Barbu, Minister of Environment and Water Management. "On January 1, the Black Sea became a European Union Sea, my country joined the EU, and took over the Presidency of the International Commission for the Protection of Danube River (ICPDR)", said the Minister. She stressed the importance of strengthening regional collaboration within the frameworks of the two Danube and Black Sea Conventions.

The Ministerial Declaration acknowledged the importance and vulnerability of the natural ecosystems in the Danube/Black Sea region and recommended that both ICPDR and BSC collaborate closer and implement the EU Framework Directive on waste waters recycling.