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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Standing Committee**

32<sup>nd</sup> meeting  
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**Specific Site - File open**

**Proposed navigable waterway in the Bystroe Estuary  
(Danube delta)  
(Ukraine)**

**REPORT BY THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

*Document prepared by:  
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**REPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA ON THE SITUATION REGARDING THE  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROVISIONS INCLUDED IN RECOMMENDATION NO. 111 (2004)  
ON THE PROPOSED NAVIGABLE WATERWAY THROUGH THE BYSTROE ESTUARY  
(DANUBE DELTA, UKRAINE), ADOPTED BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE  
OF THE BERN CONVENTION ON 3 DECEMBER 2004**

I. In relation, to completing of legal procedures, there was an intention, supported by the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programmer (2006), to establish a Biosphere Reserve (BR) in the Lower Prut River followed by the proposal to add it to the Bilateral Reserve and thus to establish a Trilateral Biosphere Reserve (TBR).

In order to achieve this goal, certain activities were performed and a series of documents and strategic papers which created a basis for facilitation of establishment of the TBR were developed. Also, in order to ensure the implementation of the Agreement for the Establishment and Management of a Cross-Border Protected Area between the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine in the Danube Delta and the Lower Prut Nature Protected Areas, signed on 5 June 2000 under the aegis of the Council of Europe and entered into force on 4 October 2006, a first meeting of the Parties was organized in Bucharest in March 2011. At this meeting a Moldova-Romania-Ukraine Joint Commission was established. The mechanisms for trilateral co-operation, which includes strong political will, full implementation of existing legal instruments, scientific and technical co-operation at the Delta level, a stable socio-economic context in the Delta, exchange of information, data and methodologies, long-term harmonized monitoring, etc. were proposed at the meeting.

In 2010-2011, BIOTICA Ecological Society had implemented the UNESCO funded project “Towards Creating the Biosphere Reserves in Moldova”. In the frameworks of that project, Moldova has designated and substantiated areas on its territory to be allocated for the future Biosphere Reserve which would require special managerial arrangements.

Recommendations to the Government on a creation of Biosphere Reserves in the Republic of Moldova were suggested and approved by the National MAB Committee of the Republic of Moldova that include, among other, the following:

- Initiate the establishment of Biosphere Reserves in the Republic of Moldova based on the internationally recognized zones –the Lower Dniester and the Lower Prut Lakes Ramsar Sites, and further – Unguri-Holosnita.
- Establish, within the national scale of responsibilities, National Parks as the legal entities (juridical persons) with correspondent zoning and managerial bodies that would be the basis for the international recognition of Biosphere Reserves in Moldova by UNESCO.

Local stakeholders support the idea to create the Lower Prut Lakes National Park and further Biosphere Reserve emphasizing the necessity to create a sustainable financial mechanism for protected areas such as National Parks and Biosphere Reserves.

A number of programs and projects focusing on the territory of the future Biosphere Reserve were also implemented. At the international level, in 2009, the ICPDR has developed a Management Plan for the Danube River District Basin in conformity with provisions of the EU WFD. In 2002-2003 a TACIS project which contributed to the establishment of the opportunity for the authorities of the protected areas and representatives of the local authorities from the neighboring districts in Romania, Ukraine and Moldova (under the aegis of the Lower Danube Euro-region) to co-operate in formulating the first joint management plan for the natural reserves in the Danube Delta and lower Prut area was implemented. Based on broad consultation among a large number of specialists and stakeholders from the three countries, the joint management plan establishes the objectives needed to ensure harmonized action for nature protection and sustainable use of the natural resources, to achieve better communication with local communities as well as local communities’ involvement in implementing the concept of sustainable development. The project partners were Odessa Regional Council and Danube Biosphere Reserve (Ukraine), Cahul district authority and the Scientific Reserve “Lower Prut” (Republic of Moldova), and Tulcea County Council and the lead partner Danube Delta Biosphere Reservation Administration (Romania).

Some other strategic documents, reports and papers focusing on the Moldovan part of the Danube Delta which were developed by (or with participation of) the Moldovan experts which contributed to the establishment and management of the future Biosphere Reserve are the following:

- Strategic Environmental Action Plan (Danube River Basin Environmental Programme, 1994);
- Selected Actions in Ukraine and Moldova (TACIS project, 1998-2000);
- Improvement of the Prut River Lakes in the Cahul district (Wetlands International, 1999);
- Ministerial Declaration on the Lower Danube Green Corridor establishment by Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Moldova (2000);
- Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (UNDP, 2001);
- Sustainable Development Strategy of the Manta Lakes region (TACIS project, 2003) (developed by Moldsilva)
- Evaluation Study to support Development of the Management Plan for the Lower Prut Lakes Ramsar Site towards Wise Use and Sustainable Development & Action Plan (IUCN/Ramsar Secretariat, 2005 - implemented by the Center of Strategic Environmental Studies "ECOS")
- Baseline inventory of priority wetlands in the Moldovan part of the Danube River Basin which should be a part of the Danube River Basin Management Plan towards integrated management of water resources in line with EU WFD (IUCN/Ramsar Secretariat, 2009 - implemented by the Center of Strategic Environmental Studies "ECOS")
- The Law on the Ecological Network (entered in force in 2007)
- National program on establishing the National Ecological Network (Governmental Decision nr. 593 of 01.08. 2011)

II. The following conferences, workshops and other public events were organized in order to ensure the development of constructive dialogue between the national and local authorities, local communities, non-governmental organizations, and scientists, and communicate openly about the progress of decision making:

- International Conference: Integrated management of natural resources of the transboundary basin of the Dniester River, 2004.
- National Conference on the Capacity Building in Biodiversity Conservation. Chisinau, 2003.
- Regional Conference: Conservation of biodiversity in the scientific (strict) reserve "Lower Prut" and transboundary cooperation in protected natural areas of the Lower Danube Euro-region (Romania, Moldova, Ukraine). Chisinau, 2004.
- Round tables on the implementation of the Biological Diversity Conservation National Strategy and Action Plan; (in cooperation with Moldavian Ecological Movement). Article published in "Natura" magazine
- Open Days at the Botanical Garden of ASM organized each year.
- Open day at the faculties of biologic specialization of the Moldova State University (with involvement of the Faculty of Biology faculty of MSU).
- National school contests on biology
- Regional and national school contests on ecology
- Establishment of the Center for continuous training for capacity building of staff working in the field of environmental protection.
- GIS trainings (jointly with REC Moldova), amounting 45 academic hours.
- Thematic radio broadcasts "Conservation of biologic diversity".
- Film shooting: Biodiversity conservation – achievements and barriers.

- Inter-sectoral dialog on the implementation of the Biological Diversity Conservation National Strategy and Action Plan (jointly with REC Moldova).
- Public discussion of the possibilities for extension of forests (jointly with “Moldsilva”.
- Development of the civil society’s capacities for the activities of restoration and conservation of the biodiversity (jointly with NGO “Ecospectr”).
- Roundtables and workshops with central and local public authorities aimed at the achievement of integrated management of water resources, including development of the small river basins management plans, appropriate sanitation in rural areas, etc.

III. Currently, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Romania are implementing the joint project “Joint environmental monitoring, assessment and exchange of information for integrated management of the Danube Delta region” funded by “Environment and Security” Initiative (through the UNEP Regional Office for Europe) and administered by the ICPDR. Duration of the project –2 years (November 2010 – November 2012). The goal of the project is to improve cross-border cooperation in the Danube Delta and building capacities for introducing a river basin approach to the management of natural resources in the Danube Delta Sub-basin. Key activities include elaboration of the Danube Delta Sub-basin Analysis Report (DDAR); Joint Danube Delta Survey (JDDS) including survey of hydromorphological alterations; field studies in the sub-basin area and coastal zone; GIS developing and dissemination of information. Project’s deliverables will consist of the: Danube Delta Sub-basin Analysis Report agreed by the parties and ICPDR Expert and Technical Groups, comprehensive Joint Danube Delta Survey undertaken with the active involvement of the Danube Delta countries and supported with international expertise (accomplished activity); GIS based thematic maps of the basin; popular and illustrated executive summary of the report and other public information materials based on the project’s substantive outputs, and proposals for undertaking of the next steps towards integrated basin planning and management.

The project will establish the basis for the development and enhancement of a coordinated water management policy in the Danube Delta Region based on the principles of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the provisions of the Joint Declaration of the Heads of Delegations from the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine “Towards a River Basin Management Plan for the Danube Delta supporting sustainable development of the region” (Vienna, December 2007).

This project represents the first essential step towards achieving the integrated management of the DDS, including establishing of monitoring program to assess, in the long term, the environmental state of the Danube delta, including the effects of the navigable waterway and the success of any mitigation and compensation measures to be undertaken in the frameworks of the Danube Delta Sub-basin Management Plan to be developed further on the basis the Danube Delta Analysis Report. The Danube Delta Sub-basin Analysis Report will significantly improve knowledge including about hydro-morphological alteration and will allow to get a comprehensive picture of the environmental conditions in terms of water quality and quantity, human activities in the region (including navigation), and pressures on the environment, current and future management of water and natural resources in the Danube Delta, etc.

Also, Republic of Moldova, through the instrumentality of Romania, has applied for the **"Strengthening of natural protected areas network in order to protect biodiversity and for sustainable development in the Danube Delta and Lower Prut regions – PAN Nature"** Project.

The application for EU funds was submitted through The Joint Operational Program Romania-Moldova -Ukraine.

Another Project that Republic of Moldova decided to apply for is " "Common Action Plan Romania - Republic of Moldova for conservation of the European Otter (*Lutra lutra*) in border area" The application for Transboundary Cooperation Program Romania - Moldova - Ukraine funds was already submitted.

IV: Danube Delta Analysis Report to be prepared in the frameworks of the “Joint environmental monitoring, assessment and exchange of information for integrated management of the Danube Delta

region” project aims also to consider the Danube Delta specific issues one of which is a richest biodiversity. Danube Delta has been recognized as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention in 1995 and designated as a Biosphere Reserve under UNESCO’s Man and the Biosphere Program in 1998. In total, more than 20,000 pairs of waterfowl breed in the Danube Delta including common tern *Sterna hirundo*, sandwich tern *S. sandvicensis*, and little tern *S. albifrons*, coot *Fulica atra*, mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, red-crested pochard *Netta rufina*, night heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, glossy ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, grey heron *Ardea cinerea*, little egret *Egretta garzetta*, great egret *E. alba*, purple heron *Ardea purpurea*, squacco heron *Ardeola ralloides*, pied avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, Kentish plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* and oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*. The Danube Delta is the habitat for six globally threatened and near threatened species: slender-billed curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* (critically endangered), red-breasted goose *Branta ruficollis* (endangered), Dalmatian pelican *Pelecanus crispus* (vulnerable), ferruginous duck *Aythya nyroca*, pygmy cormorant *Phalacrocorax pigmaeus* and white-tailed eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* (all near threatened). Part of the Delta between estuaries of Bystre and Vostochne is one of the most important habitats of waders in the Danube region. It’s a key habitat for many other waterfowl. Various impacts and pressures in Delta, including hydromorphological alterations (e.g., construction of the canal Bystroe) can have such negative ecological consequences as damage to the habitat, spawning condition and feeding base of the majority of the fish species dwelling in this area (including the Danube herring); impact on sturgeon population (hydro-morphological alterations are known as the main threat to migratory sturgeons); effect on nesting and breeding conditions of bird species; negative changes in plant communities (including danger of invasive species and eutrophication) as well as effects on the hydrological balance of the Delta; increased probability of oil product pollution of the estuary; negative effects on mammals, etc. (source: WWF International).

Draft Danube Delta Analysis Report to be prepared under the project will be discussed and agreed with Romanian, Ukrainian and Moldovan central authorities responsible for environmental issues and water management, and with the ICPDR constituency / working groups. Public consultations will be held within the region in Tulcea (Romania), Izmail (Ukraine) and Cahul (Moldova) to ensure active involvement of the public and stakeholders in the process of elaboration and implementation of a River Basin Management Plan for the DDS. The DDAR will be published and disseminated in Ukrainian, Russian, English, and Romanian/Moldovan. Derived communication products will be developed to increase the report’s impact among the public and decision-makers (popular summary, a collection of maps, electronic versions of all major outputs). All this will contribute to promoting dialogue on environmental issues affecting the biological diversity of the Danube Delta.