

## **Ministerial Declaration**

### **on the preparation of the establishment of the**

### **“Mura-Drava-Danube Transboundary Biosphere Reserve” (MDD-TBR)**

The Federal Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management of the Republic of Austria,

The Minister of Culture of the Republic of Croatia,

The Minister of Rural Development of the Republic of Hungary,

The Minister of Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning of the Republic of Serbia,

The Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning of the Republic of Slovenia,

Reaffirming their commitment to the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, especially to CBD COP 7, Decision VII/28 and its annexed Programme of Work on Protected Areas, and to CBD COP 9, Decision IX/19 on Protected Areas, paragraph 6, inviting parties to the CBD to establish, in accordance with their national legislation, transboundary protected areas and, as appropriate, ecological networks,

Recalling the Seville Strategy and the Statutory Framework of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, both adopted at the general conference of UNESCO in 1995,

Recalling the Madrid Action Plan agreed on the Third World Congress of the Biosphere Reserves which builds on the Seville Strategy and aims to raise biosphere reserves to be the principal internationally designated areas dedicated to sustainable development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century,

Recalling the adoption of the Ramsar Convention's Strategic Plan 2009-2015 in Resolution X.1 of Ramsar COP 10 in Changwon, Korea, suggesting to enhance the conservation and wise use of wetlands using effective international cooperation for transboundary wetlands, and proposing additional partnerships between parties and UNEP, UNDP, UNECE (the Water Convention), UNESCO, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and others, especially in the implementation of Ramsar Resolution VII.19 on Guidelines for international cooperation,

Regarding the "Changwon Declaration on human well-being and wetlands", adopted by the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran 1971) in Changwon, Republic of Korea (28.Oct.-4.Nov.2008) as Resolution X.3, which states that the degradation and loss of wetlands is more rapid than that of other ecosystems and that there is an urgent need to improve water governance and integrated water management at the scale of river basins and that interrelationships between wetlands and human health should be a key component of national and international policies, plans and strategies,

Recalling the Declaration concerning common approaches to water management, flood protection, hydropower utilization and nature and biodiversity conservation in the Drava River Basin ("Drava River Declaration"), signed as a full support to the Drava River Vision Symposium, Maribor, 24 September 2008, by the Danube River Basin States Austria, Croatia, Hungary and Slovenia, and adopted by the Participants of the Drava River Vision Symposium,

Recalling the Danube Declaration adopted at the Ministerial meeting of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) on February 16, 2010 on shared waters and joint responsibilities in the Danube River Basin,

Recalling with appreciation the results of the Croatian-Hungarian cooperation in the field of environment and nature conservation, particularly the Joint Declaration on the establishment of the Croatian-Hungarian Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, signed on 17 September 2009 in Barcs,

Noting with appreciation the support from the UNESCO and from the international, such as WWF and EuroNatur as well as national and local non-governmental organizations, for the establishment of a Transboundary Biosphere Reserve along the Mura-Drava-Danube river system,

Noting further that certain areas of the Mura-Drava-Danube region have already been included into the Ramsar Convention's list of wetlands of international importance, as well as into the Natura 2000 network of the European Union and the Emerald network of Europe,

Recognizing the EU legal requirements on water, nature protection and the challenges of climate change as provided among others by the EU Water Framework Directive, Floods Directive, Habitats and Birds Directives,

Desiring to enhance communication and exchange of information relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of the area concerned,

Stressing the importance of implementing joint strategies for conservation and sustainable use of the protected areas, the Natura 2000 network, Ramsar sites and other wetlands in the Mura-Drava-Danube region,

Recognizing that the MDD-TBR has a strong potential for promoting the sustainable development such as eco-tourism on the basis of awareness raising and environmental education in the concerned regions, and that the life of people living in this river system will benefit directly and indirectly by the establishment of this reserve,

1. Building on the existing internationally and nationally designated protected areas and networks, endeavour to establish the Mura-Drava-Danube Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (MDD-TBR) along the 5 countries (Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia, Slovenia), aiming at the conservation and restoration of the natural and semi-natural status of their habitats and ecosystems in the cross-border area.

2. Decide, for this purpose, to cooperate both bilaterally and multilaterally, building on all relevant, existing or future framework of cooperation such as the existing Croatian –Hungarian intergovernmental sub-committee for nature conservation and other bilateral and multilateral commissions on water management and nature conservation in order to improve, harmonize and sustain their management of a shared ecosystem.

3. Decide, in order to prepare the establishment of the MDD-TBR and enhance the exchange of information, to set up a Coordination Board of 15 members. Each Minister will nominate three members for the Coordination Board and one contact person for national coordination and communication. The Coordination Board will be convened as required, but at least once every year, and chaired by a member representing a Minister, on the basis of a rotation principle. Non-governmental organisations and other observers will be invited to the Coordination Board meetings.

The Coordination Board, deciding by consent, will

- coordinate the next steps to achieve the Biosphere Reserve status for the Mura-Drava-Danube River system,
- coordinate the cooperation aiming at the declaration of a pentilateral MDD-TBR according to the criteria of the „Man and Biosphere MAB-Programme“ of UNESCO, and promote joint measures for the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of that site,
- promote measures to make the MDD-TBR function effectively in accordance with UNESCO recommendations,
- promote common activities to increase support and common understanding for the MDD-TBR, support the development of common conservation and restoration projects, and investigate funding sources for their implementation,
- identify key issues for the cooperation in the conservation and sustainable use of the Mura-Drava-Danube river system,
- elaborate and approve the rules of procedure for the Coordination Board,
- once the MDD-TBR is established, work out the proposal for framework of future cooperation.

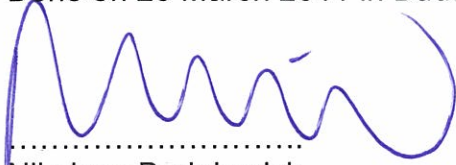
4. Affirm their intention to make available, in accordance with their national legislation, all relevant documents and information that may be necessary for the designation of the pentilateral MDD-TBR and for the development of common principles and guidelines for a harmonized management.

5. Endeavour to make all effort to enhance and facilitate research, monitoring, communication and exchange of information relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of the area concerned.

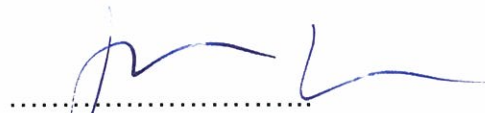
6. Endeavour to promote the co-operation of the MDD-TBR national management units with local communities for the benefit of sustainable development, taking into account the UNESCO Seville Strategy, thereby offering an opportunity to improve the ecosystem-based management of the floodplain area adapted to the local conditions, supporting the livelihood and the availability of ecosystem services for the local communities, and at the same time ensuring the conservation of natural values of the alluvial area.

7. Note that nothing in this Declaration or its subsequent document shall prejudice in any manner the delimitation between the State Signatories.

Done on 25 March 2011 in Budapest in five originals in the English language.



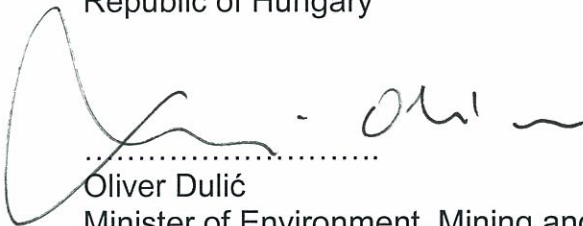
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