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INBO Panel

Statement by Romania

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**Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is a pleasure to be here today and to have an active contribution to this debate. I believe that this is a good opportunity to enhance our cooperation as we work together to achieve the common goals.

Romania pays a great attention to the public participation process in the water resources management, in accordance with national and EU legislation.

Public participation is an important tool in the national, regional or local development activities, imparting quality in decision-making and strengthening the authorities decisions through public support in their implementation.

In this respect, in Romania the River Basin Committees are the main consultative bodies established at the level of each river basin and they are organized based on a Governmental Decision, having as main objective achieving an efficient cooperation between water management authority, local public administrations and the main stakeholders at the river basin level.

In the process of the Water Framework Directive implementation in Romania, the public was engaged at different levels through the 11 River Basin Committees. The process has been based on guidelines that had been developed at the national level following the Common Implementation Strategy of the Water Framework Directive and the Public Participation Strategy for the Danube River Basin District. Any significant step in developing the River Basin Management Plan has been completed with the information, consultation and public participation, having as final objective the improving the decision-making in the water field.

Taking into account the experience gained during the elaboration of the first River Basin Management Plans, the stakeholders have been involved since the early stages of the drafting process of the updated River Basin Management Plans, according to the published document on timetable and measures for informing and consulting the stakeholders and wide public.

Panel II: Strengthening citizens participation in basin management: policy, representativeness and challenges

The public participation process allowed the stakeholders and interested people to better understand the significant water management issues and also encouraged them to find potential solutions. In this respect, for the process of updating the River Basin Management Plans, there were organized 60 consultation meetings focusing on specific target groups of stakeholders to inform them about the water issues at the basin and national level. These meetings were accompanied by press conferences and newspaper articles. All important documents were published on the website pages of the Ministry of Waters and Forests and the National Administration "Romanian Waters" and its branches and have been made available to stakeholders and the public. The tools for making the information available to the public and to collect comments and suggestions were multiple, for example: leaflets and brochures have been produced with brief and clear information on the content of the updated River Basin Management Plans and program of measures, online questionnaires to gather public feedback.

At the same time, the Ministry of Waters and Forests and the National Administration "Romanian Waters" organized public meetings at the national level to share knowledge on specific issues in the water management field, such as water quality protection, program of measures, flood risk measures through a dialogue with all stakeholders.

At the national level, hundreds of proposals and comments were received from stakeholders, including NGOs and citizens and many of them have been taken into consideration leading to improvement of the River Basin Management Plans.

I want to conclude by underlining the main lessons learned from this process:

- *Better results can be obtained if the number of interest groups is expanded according to the specific issues in the river basin;*
- *The tools used need to be adequate in order to engage specific target groups;*
- *Non-technical language must be used in addressing the public;*

Panel II: Strengthening citizens participation in basin management: policy, representativeness and challenges

- *Close contact must be maintained between the decision-makers and key stakeholders, NGOs and the public during the entire cycle of the development of River Basin Management Plans;*
- *Adequate financial resources must be secured for promoting the process via local/regional and national media.*

Thank you for your attention .