

Declaration of the Ministers of Environment

of the Contracting Parties to the
*Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution on
Strengthening the Cooperation for the Rehabilitation of the Black
Sea Environment*
(Sofia, 17 April 2009)

We, the Ministers responsible for the protection of the environment Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine, Contracting Parties to *the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution*, meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria, 17 April 2009;

Fully recognizing the need to preserve The Black Sea ecosystem as a valuable natural endowment of the region, whilst ensuring the protection of its marine and coastal living resources as a condition for sustainable development of the Black Sea coastal states, well-being, health and security of their population;

Acknowledging the increasing volume of oil and gas products transported through the Black Sea and the potential risk of pollution to the coastal and marine habitats;

Considering our responsibility to manage coastal and marine habitats in a way that they equitably meet the development needs of future generations;

Recognizing the fact that environmental policies implemented in the Black Sea coastal states and other states of the Black Sea basin have contributed significantly to the recovery trend displayed by the Black Sea ecosystem in recent years;

Reconfirming our commitment for the continued improvement of the state of the Black Sea ecosystem;

Reaffirming our obligation to fulfill the provisions of the *Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution*, signed in Bucharest on 21 April 1992, and its Protocols;

Noting that the Declaration on the Protection of the Black Sea, signed in Odessa on 7th April 1993; the *Strategic Action Plan for the Rehabilitation and Protection of the Black Sea*, signed in Istanbul on 31st October 1996 and the Declaration on the Protection of the Black Sea, signed in Sofia on 14th June 2002 and the *Strategic Action Plan for the Environmental Protection and Rehabilitation of the Black Sea*, adopted in Sofia on 17 April 2009, have as their ultimate aims the sustainable development of the Black Sea coastal States;

Recalling the commitments enshrined in the Declaration of the Fifth Ministerial UNECE Conference, “Environment for Europe” (Kiev, May 2003), in the Declaration of the Ministers in Charge of Water Management of the Contracting Parties to the *Danube River Protection Convention* and the *Convention for the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution on the Enhancement of Cooperation* (Bucharest, February 2007), in the Declaration of the Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the UNECE Region (Belgrade, October 2007), in the joint Declaration adopted at the Meeting of the Ministers in charge of environmental protection of the BSEC Member States, (Bucharest, 3 March 2006);

Recalling that the basis for cooperative action in implementing the *Strategic Action Plan for the Rehabilitation and Protection of the Black Sea* 1996, amended 2002, includes the precautionary principle, the polluter pays principle, anticipatory actions, the use of clean technologies, the use of economic instruments, the involvement of stakeholders, transparency and public participation;

Appreciating the improved regional cooperation in tackling emergency situations and welcoming its further strengthening and involvement of oil sector;

Noting the increasing commitment of the European Union (EU) to the protection of the Black Sea environment in the Danube/Black Sea region and the readiness of the EU to “contribute to better coordinating specific environmental programs” for the Black Sea as stated in the Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the countries of EU and of the wider Black Sea area at the initial Meeting of the Black Sea Synergy Cooperation, Kiev, 14 February 2008;

Welcoming the assistance provided by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), International Maritime Organization (IMO), Danube Black Sea Task Force (DABLAS) and other international donor and financing agencies, as well as the increasing participation of the private sectors including OSPRI (Oil Spill Preparedness Regional Initiative) and the growing collaboration of non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) in the protection and preservation of the Black Sea environment;

Acknowledging the commitment and efforts of the *Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution* and its coordinating role towards the promotion and implementation of the Bucharest Convention and its Protocols and Strategic Action Plan for Rehabilitation and Protection of the Black Sea;

Recognizing the challenge to prevent and further reduce negative effects following economic recovery, social development, population growth and potential impacts of climate changes in the Black Sea region taking into account the sensitivity and fragility of the Black Sea ecosystem.

Being aware that improved management approaches are needed to cope with the adverse effects of pollution, overexploitation of marine living resources, resulting in eutrophication, habitat loss, and degradation of this unique ecosystem and ultimate economic and social losses for the population of the Black Sea coastal states;

Recognizing that elevated input of nutrients which causes eutrophication over wide areas of the Black Sea remains a concern to the coastal states;

Continuing to take significant political action for the protection and rehabilitation of the Black Sea and to develop and further improve legal framework for regional cooperation;

Recognizing that for the emerging priorities in the management of the Black Sea environment following the development of the Black Sea coastal states, realistic and well targeted eco-quality objectives, short and medium term management targets shall be set and hence the need for regular updating and monitoring of implementation of the *Strategic Action Plan for the Environmental Protection and Rehabilitation of the Black Sea, 2009*.

Recalling the need for introduction of the ecosystem based management in fisheries sector and improvement of the regional cooperation in preserving and replenishing marine living resources;

Being aware that the Black Sea ecosystem may still face losses of biodiversity and of the necessity of further cooperation and concerted action by the Black Sea coastal states to maintain biodiversity and prevent habitat loss are needed;

Realizing that the increasing pressures on the Black Sea environment calls for a proactive role for the *Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Pollution*, and ensuring the use of the full potential of institutional network by providing adequate financial resources and technical assistance;

have agreed to:

- 1) **welcome** the adoption of the *Protocol for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Black Sea from Land-Based Sources and Activities* according to Article 20 of the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution and to renew efforts towards its implementation;
- 2) **adopt** the *Strategic Action Plan for the Environmental Protection and Rehabilitation of the Black Sea, 2009*;
- 3) **welcome** the signing of the Final Act of the Diplomatic Conference to formalize the adoption of above instruments;
- 4) **welcome** the adoption of the *Contingency Plan (Volume I : Response To Oil Spills 2003)* as an Annex to the *Protocol on Cooperation in Combating Pollution of the Black Sea by Oil and Other Harmful Substances*;
- 5) **welcome** the signing of the *Black Sea Biodiversity and Landscape Conservation Protocol* by Georgia to speed up its ratification and entry into force;
- 6) **further strengthen** the infrastructure and capacity for implementation of the *Strategic Action Plan for the Environmental Protection and Rehabilitation of the Black Sea*, adopted on 17th April 2009, including actions to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, further enhance the application of the ecosystem approach to the environmental management of the Black Sea;

- 7) **finalize** without further delay a legal framework for the sustainable management of fisheries and marine living resources and to establish regulatory framework for maintaining healthy and viable fish stocks in the Black Sea, taking into account the previous work and efforts as well as the experience of other regional agreements and arrangements;
- 8) **Initiate** a joint process within the Black Sea Commission to elaborate further on the proposal for the amendment of the Convention submitted by Bulgaria and Romania on the accession of regional economic integration organizations with a view to develop a recommendation on such amendments as may be required;
- 9) **incorporate** up-to-date environmental management approaches, practices and technologies, with particular attention to integrated coastal zone management, introduction of green technologies, sustainable human development and ecosystem based management of human activities;
- 10) **co-ordinate and** harmonize where appropriate the Black Sea environmental policies with relevant regional and global initiatives and agreements in order to achieve synergy in the actions aimed at the further recovery of the Black Sea environment and contribute to sustainable development of the Black Sea coastal states
- 11) **improve** regional and national capacity and preparedness to prevent and respond to emergency situations and natural disasters threatening the Black Sea environment, as well as to take all necessary measures to decrease risk by increasing shipping safety *inter alia* making fully operational *Black Sea Contingency Plan to the Protocol on Cooperation in Combating Pollution of the Black Sea by oil and other harmful substances* in emergency situations;
- 12) **develop** national and regional strategies and action plans and undertake necessary actions aimed at prevention and mitigation of consequences of the introduction of alien species;
- 13) **encourage** introduction of best environmental practices and best environmental technologies in the Black Sea basin in order to minimize pollution and degradation of the Black Sea from point and diffuse land-based sources and activities, notably from agriculture;
- 14) **reduce** littering of the Black Sea, notably by strengthening environmental policies for shipping and tourist industries and raising public awareness and involvement;
- 15) **promote** development and implement river basin management plans for large and medium rivers flowing into the Black Sea in order to reduce their influence on the Black Sea;
- 16) **strengthen** regional cooperation in the establishment of network of protected areas, with particular attention to marine protected areas, and development and introduction of species conservation plans, *inter alia* marine mammals, in cooperation with relevant international organizations, in the coastal zone of the Black Sea aiming at species and habitat conservation;

- 17) **strengthen** cooperation in improving scientific knowledge and forecast of environmental changes important for the Black Sea ecosystem and population of the Black Sea coastal states, notably by coordinating national and international scientific research programs and monitoring and securing the necessary funding for the research;
- 18) **further** strengthen cooperation with international organizations such as GEF, UNDP, UNEP, BSEC (*Black Sea Economic Cooperation*), European Union, the World Bank, and IMO, in support of the implementation of the *Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution* and its protocols;
- 19) **encourage** a broader stakeholder involvement, including the active participation of NGO's and the private sector in the implementation of environmental protection policies;
- 20) **welcome** and highly appreciate the efforts of the Government of Ukraine for the preparation process of the Ministerial Meeting;
- 21) **express** our appreciation and gratitude to the Government of Bulgaria for hosting this Meeting in Sofia, 17 April 2009.

Done in Sofia, 17 April 2009