

Consultative meeting on the Integrated Management of the extended Drin River Basin - 24 November 2008 Tirana, Albania

Welcome address on behalf of Fritz Holzwarth, Deputy Director General Water Management at the Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

The "Petersberg Process on Trans-boundary Water Cooperation" was launched in March 1998 as a joint initiative of the German Federal Government and the World Bank. The first conference was held in March 1998 at Petersberg near Bonn and highlighted water as an opportunity for close regional cooperation from a global perspective. To date, ten Round Tables on Trans-boundary Waters had been organized by Germany, World Bank, Greece and other partners. This informal dialogue, attended by ministers, senior policy makers, academics, representatives of international organizations and NGOs, outlined the problems of trans-boundary water management and examined regional case studies.

The Athens Declaration Process concerning Shared Water, Shared Future and Shared Knowledge initiated in 2003, provides a framework for a long-term process to support cooperative activities for integrated management of shared water bodies within the SEE and Mediterranean regions.

It was therefore a logical step to join forces and to combine the two processes. The joint Petersberg Process Phase II and Athens Declaration Process, launched in Berlin in December 2005 has become a reference for many other processes and activities in the region. Its based on the strong believe in the principles of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) which provide guidance for an effective management of shared water bodies within transboundary river basins which generate synergies and benefits for all countries in a basin.

Against this background the German Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety is supporting this consultative meeting because we consider the Drin Basin as a promising case for both preserving a worldwide unique eco system and generating benefits for the countries sharing the basin. Having in mind the complexity of the hydrological and ecological characteristics of the Drin

system there is no alternative to a co-operative management for the basin if the requirements of social and economic development in the region are to be met without deteriorating the environment which finally provides the services and resources.

I regret that no German representative can participate in the consultative meeting and the following Workshop, because of other urgent duties. However, I wish the consultative meeting and the „Workshop on Integrated Water Resources Management with reference to the conditions in the extended Drin River Basin“ fruitful discussions as well as great success in defining concrete steps for enhancing trans-boundary co-operation in the Drin basin.