

Establishment of sustainable sediment management in the Sava River Basin

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Introduction:

Sediment is essential, integral and dynamic part of river basins. Sediment forms a variety of habitats. Many aquatic species live in the sediment and it forms favourable conditions for a high biodiversity. As its great environmental value has not been properly addressed in the Sava River Basin yet, the Parties to the Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin (FASRB) – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia – have decided to develop the Protocol on Sediment Management to the FASRB, under the coordinating role of the International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC), in order to regulate the cooperation among the Parties in this regard, and to ensure sustainable sediment management in the Sava River Basin, by addressing both quality and quantity issues of sediment. As the sediment management is an important element of the river basin management, the Protocol represents a step towards the establishment of sustainable water management in the basin.

Purpose of the Protocol:

As the sediment has been recognized by the Parties as an important natural asset with a high socio-economic and environmental value, the main purpose of the Protocol is the cooperation of the Parties to achieve sustainable sediment management in the Sava River Basin.

According to the provisions of the Protocol, the Parties will adopt the Sava River Basin Sediment Management Plan. It will cover the following issues, *inter alia*:

- evaluation of sediment balance and sediment quality and quantity;
- monitoring of sediment;
- measures to prevent impacts and pollution of water or sediment;
- measures to control erosion processes;
- measures to ensure integrity of water regime comprising quality and quantity and to protect wetland, floodplains and retention areas;
- measures to provide, ensure and maintain conditions for safe navigation;
- determination of designated areas for capital dredging;

- guidance for sediment disposal, sediment treatment and use.

The Sava River Basin Sediment Management Plan will be adopted by the Parties not later than six years after the Protocol enters into force and it will be revised in the six year cycles afterwards.

On the yearly basis, the Parties will develop the Dredging Programmes which will be sent to the ISRBC. Through the ISRBC, all the Parties will be informed, among other sediment issues, about the planned dredging locations and the quantities of the material to be dredged. Only maintenance dredging will be allowed in the Sava River Basin. The capital dredging will be allowed on the designated areas which will be harmonized with the Sava River Basin Management Plan. All the dredging will be performed by the legal entities to avoid incompetent and illegal exploitation of the sediment. The Parties will establish a coordinated monitoring system in order to provide all data necessary for development of the Sediment Management Plan. According to a provision of the Protocol, the Parties will exchange information related to the implementation of the Protocol and cooperate in the conduct of research of technologies for sustainable sediment management. Each Party will designate a competent authority which will be responsible for implementation of the Protocol, and its focal point for official communication.

By the Protocol, the Parties have recognized the importance of the sediment management for maintaining the water regime (both quality and quantity) and for maintaining and improvement of navigable parts of the Sava River and its tributaries. The Protocol affirms the need for promotion of the cooperation among the Parties and for promotion of sustainable sediment management solutions which carefully balance the socio-economic and environmental values in the Sava River Basin. Without sustainable sediment management, a good ecological status or good ecological potential of surface waters, and good chemical status of groundwater, can not be reached!

References: [1] Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin; [2] Protocol on sediment management.