

# EDITORIAL

*During 1982 the journal gave much emphasis to the work of the UN and its many specialized agencies — and particularly to UNEP. This could be interpreted by our readers as showing imbalance — and perhaps it is, indeed, “imbalance” — but it should not be regarded as being a shift in editorial policy. The reason being that environmental activities in the UN family played a superior role — not only because UNCLOS was finalized and “10 Years After Stockholm” spotlighted environmental problems but especially due to the breakthrough made by environmental law at the international level. For it must be realized that it was certainly a “late comer” to the international scene, also demonstrated by the fact that for the first time a comprehensive soft law text — the World Charter For Nature — was “adopted and solemnly proclaimed” by the General Assembly (see page 30). We shall report in detail next time.*

*On the other hand, the journal has been very critical on many occasions of the UN and several of its subsidiary bodies and we felt obliged to keep our readers informed of these recent positive developments. Changes have only been achieved because pressure has been brought to bear from the environmental lobby and future progress can only be assured if more people are informed of what is going on. For the information “gap”, even among those concerned, is still, unfortunately, a broad “valley”.*

*Four important international conferences which took place at the end of last year were too late to be included in this issue: The Third World Congress on National Parks (Bali, 11-21 October), RAMSAR (Paris, 2-3 December), UNCLOS (Jamaica, 6-10 December) and the Ozone Layer Conference (Geneva, 10-17 December). Reports, and where relevant, recommendations of these meetings, will be covered in the next issue of the journal.*

*In contrast, this issue deals mostly with national policy. One such development — with all its international repercussions — not included due to deadline, is the decision taken at the beginning of November by the Japanese government to file a formal complaint against the International Whaling Commission’s decision to end commercial whaling in three years. It was hoped that Japan could be pressured into switching its stance as it was likely that other opponents of the ban, including the Soviet Union, Peru and Norway, might fall into line. (Although it is estimated that approximately 50,000 Japanese are dependent on the whaling industry, a public opinion survey, conducted by the independent Nippon Research Centre, found that 47% of the population were in favour of the Commission’s ban). As expected, on the same day as the Japanese decision, the Norwegian government announced that it would continue whaling.*

*It will be interesting to see if the US will abide by its promise to use its legislation to prohibit the Japanese from fishing in coastal waters up to 200 miles from the US shoreline — where Japan catches more than 1.1 million tons of fish yearly. An interesting parallel has just occurred as the Canadians warned the EEC (with success) that they would cut fishing rights if the Community should ban baby seal imports (see also page 30). □*

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