

EDITORIAL

This issue includes the resolutions adopted by the forty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly of interest to our readers. The delay in reporting on these is due to the largely non-existent information flow from the General Assembly. As the number of topics on the agenda (both interesting and of less general interest) during the weeks of debates, is too great for normal newspaper coverage, this is — except in the case of sensational news — usually completely neglected. So it is incomprehensible why the UN does not try to keep at least its own information service working adequately for those seeking information. In this respect, it is amusing to note that in the resolution on Antarctica (see page 31), the General Assembly expresses its concern over the “non-availability of information to the Secretary-General”, and requests to be kept “fully informed” of developments, while remaining blind to its own shortcomings.

Following the recently adopted Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment (see page 5), the third session of the UNEP ad hoc Working Group of Experts for the exchange of information on potentially harmful chemicals (in particular pesticides) in international trade, which met at the beginning of this month in London, have agreed on guidelines. These will also be presented to UNEP's Governing Council during the session from 9 - 14 June. However, they do not represent a substantial advance on the present notification system, and lobbying not to accept them at the meeting has already begun. A commentary on the guidelines is planned for the next issue.

Also under the auspices of UNEP, the International Parliamentary Union's ad hoc Committee (see page 14) has now convened, and we are pleased to report that this meeting was of a much more concrete and substantial form than the previous one. The report will follow in the next issue.

Some background papers for the Governing Council have been published and in the next issue we shall report on the most important aspects in our field. Prior to the session, UNEP's Executive-Director, Mostafa Tolba, intends to mark Environment Day on the 5 June by honouring 500 people in the world for their successful efforts in the environmental field.

With regard to the report on the Protocol for Chlorofluorocarbons (see page 11), the meeting in Vienna, which attempted to reach an agreement to freeze current production levels of CFCs and to end their use over time, has been concluded. Early this month, the United States charged that the European Community, Japan and the Soviet Union, were dragging their feet in order to serve their own economic self-interest. As expected, the first clashes between the different groups have been recorded. We shall report on the outcome of the conference in the next issue, but can already say that no agreement was reached on the draft Protocol. The Environment Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany stated that he wishes to continue his efforts with regard to the Protocol, even though he expects to be cited before the European Court for dancing out of the European lineup.

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The report of the World Commission on Environment and Development is scheduled to be published in London on 27 April. We plan to devote a future issue to its conclusions and recommendations. The report will undoubtedly be the subject of much discussion within Parliaments, in the Council and at the General Assembly.

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The African Convention was signed in 1968 in Algiers by the Heads of State of independent African countries. At that time air pollution, noise, and impact assessment, were not recognized as presenting a problem for African countries. The draft amending the Convention to present-day requirements has been finalized by the group of experts, and is expected to be submitted to the next summit of African Heads of State for their approval.

27 February 1987

— Wolfgang Bräunlich —