

EDITORIAL

The United Nations General Assembly has now completed what Rio requested. One of the resolutions adopted concerns the institutional arrangements to carry this out (see report on page 2), and incorporates details on the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which a spokesman has stated should not turn into a "world-wide environment enforcement agency ... (nor) become eco-cops". But we shall see how it develops. In this respect, we wish Nitin Desai all the best in commencing this important work.

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Mostafa Tolba retired as Executive Director at the end of '92 after working for nearly two decades with UNEP (see also page 14). The general opinion is that although he was not always an "easy" person and took often a tough line with Governments and staff, he always sought consensus, and achieved much. The history of the United Nations in the environmental sphere will always be linked positively with Tolba's name. We hope now that his knowledge, not only of the subject area, but also of the politics behind the problems, is wisely used in the future.

I appreciated the special relationship I had with him and enjoyed particularly our many short, substantive meetings. We knew that whatever we discussed, we could rely on one another.

The GA has elected Elizabeth Dowdeswell of Canada for a four-year term, as UNEP Executive Director. Among other things, she was her country's principal delegate to the IPCC meetings. We wish her every success in the task ahead, but know that it will not be too easy to follow this special predecessor and to manage the infrastructure he created.

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Recent tanker accidents have illustrated once again that something must be done to accelerate and implement on a global scale, the regulations introduced by the United Nations International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in March last year (see last issue at page 348). However, it is unrealistic to expect to throw out all the old ships - this would be economically impossible - but for these much stricter routing and harbour provisions must be proscribed. The standards of all ships could also be so increased as to make them non-insurable and uneconomic if they cannot follow the requirements. Another problem is that ships flying flags of convenience, seen to comprise the main culprits, will not necessarily conform with the new IMO regulations. Probably the only solution will be - finally - to introduce a "flag liability" with financial implications or a "green insurance card" as a minimum requirement to enter a harbour, which would ensure that the countries concerned could no longer ignore the issues involved.

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"European Chemical News" has cited the industry's opinion that it will regard the meeting in Copenhagen to update the Montreal Protocol (see report on page 6) as a success since "environmentalists largely failed in their efforts to speed up the change to non-ozone depleting substances" and "HCFC producing companies have not lost the return on their investments". For us, that is a theme the new World Industry Council (see pages 17 and 54) should take up.

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In a number of conferences, the search for a consensus text includes checking to see if something similar has been agreed upon. Experience has shown that many participants arrive with a collection of previous treaty texts and a "private" collection of soft law - some of them cut out of this Journal!

ICEL, as a help especially for its members, publishes a collection of all existing international environmentally-related agreements, and has now added to this a collection of international environmental soft-law. The loose-leaf form allows texts to be detached for meetings and the collection to be adapted to the changing developments in this field.*

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