

EDITORIAL

At the FAO general meeting in October 1995, the Member States themselves had to use the red pencil, as General Director Jacques Diouf refused to undertake the budget cuts demanded by them. The budget now agreed (\$650 million), will force the Organisation to be more careful in the use of its available finances, because delegates refused to allow it to cut back on any parts of its programme. However, the consensus arrived at was achieved with the abstentions of three big contributors - the United States, Germany and the United Kingdom.

In the same month, a FAO Minister Conference in Quebec had as its priority the preparation of the next "World Food Summit" in Rome. Parallel to that Meeting, the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Organisation was celebrated (see also page 14).

The last World Food Summit was held more than 20 years ago. At that time, a proclamation was adopted, which stated, inter alia, that each person has the right to grow up free from hunger and malnutrition. Delegates then thought that this goal could have been achieved by now. They did not imagine that today 800 million people should still be suffering from the effects of malnutrition, and at a time when the willingness of the industrialised States to give more development aid has decreased.

Against this worsening background, the FAO Director General decided, with the agreement of the Member States, to convene another Food Summit this year in Rome. However, it is clear that if any lasting success is to be achieved, a completely new approach to the problem will have to be taken.

We have to congratulate FAO for the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries now agreed upon (see EPL vol. 25 at page 180) and for their work in negotiating the revision of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, to harmonise it with the Convention on Biological Diversity.

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A recent forests report by the UN/ECE, giving the results of national and transnational surveys from 32 European countries, states that more than 25 per cent had to be classified as damaged. The results of the report - "Forest Condition in Europe" - indicate that although there were some improvements in individual countries, forest damage continues to be a serious problem.

European forests were one of the points on the agenda for the Third Ministerial Conference in Sofia, within the framework of the ECE (see report on page 2). The Council of Europe's Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, adopted by the Ministers, together with the Ministerial Declaration (see page 31) and the European Action Programme, provide a framework to promote a consistent approach and common objectives for national and regional action in this and other areas.

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The Government of Austria and UNEP will be celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, with a ceremony on 4 December. We plan to report next time on the Seventh Meeting of the Parties (5-7 December 1995), which will consider adopting new amendments and adjustments containing even stronger measures to counteract harmful activities.

The report on the Second Conference of the Parties to the Biodiversity Convention, too late for this issue, will also be included next time.

- Wolfgang B. Brey -

2 December 1995