

# EDITORIAL

We would have liked to have been a little earlier with this issue, but we felt it very important to include at the same time the reports of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development ( page 116) and the Fifth Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council (page 141) as they are related in several aspects. We had also been hoping to receive a copy of the conclusions of the UN Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements, which was scheduled to be delivered in mid-June. For this reason, we agreed with the publisher to produce this double issue: Not least, because we want to have a little more space later for the other material waiting patiently!

We understand that among its recommendations for eliminating overlap and duplication in the programmes of the United Nations and to enhance synergy among UN organisations, the Task Force has recommended the establishment of an inter-agency Environment Management Group (EMG) under the chairmanship of the Executive Director of UNEP. The EMG would represent the first expression of the "issue management" approach outlined by the Secretary-General in his report on "Renewing the United Nations" and would be designed to be a problem-solving, results-oriented approach to achieve effective coordination and joint action in key environmental and human settlements issues throughout the UN system. We hope to be able to publish the recommendations in the next issue.

During the UNEP special session, Klaus Töpfer announced his plans for the Organisation, which include the development of an emergency response capacity and strengthening of early warning and assessment of UNEP; coordination and development of environmental policy instruments; freshwater and industry; and technology transfer. One of his principle objectives in the medium term, he said, was to seek, with the cooperation of Governments, to restore the Environment Fund to at least its 1993 level of over \$65 million.

A brief report on the meeting of the Subsidiary Bodies to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, which were the first formal FCCC meetings since the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol (see page 160) and an article on the Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (see page 152) are also included this time.

As you will see by the reports, after a long period of comparative inactivity there is now the feeling that, also at the international level, something is moving again. Although everyone hopes that this is not just a flash in the pan, we do acknowledge how difficult it is to initiate activity and enable it to gather the necessary momentum.

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The Fourth Pan-European Conference of Environment Ministers "Environment for Europe" has just finished in Aarhus, where delegates considered the new challenges and priorities in the environmental sector in a changing Europe.

You will see from the article on page 171 that the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Environmental Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (the "Aarhus Convention") was signed there, as well as two other protocols to the Convention on long-range air pollution: one on persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and the other on heavy metals. A full report of the meeting will be included in the next issue.

*Wolfgang B. S. -*

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