

EDITORIAL

Our report on the fifty-third session of the UN General Assembly (see page 64) is so late because the revised versions of the resolutions and decisions were not distributed until February, with the final ones coming only in March. In addition, the book containing the so-called “unedited” versions – which normally appears at the end of January – also did not arrive until March. It was extremely difficult to obtain a copy and we had to resort to our usual “unauthorised” sources.

A decision adopted by the Assembly on 17 December 1998 could have far-reaching consequences for the ability of civil society to influence General Assembly business. Decision L.68 has requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of member States, members of the specialised agencies, observers and intergovernmental organisations, as well as the views of NGOs from all regions, on his report on “Arrangements and practices for the interaction of non-governmental organisations in all activities of the United Nations”, presented at the 53rd session. The implications of this have already been the subject of debate in UN-subsidary bodies, including the December 1998 meeting of ECOSOC.

Our original plan was to produce an issue covering the UN General Assembly and UNEP’s Governing Council. However, as the preparations took longer than expected, we decided it would be better to produce a double issue and to include the outcome of the seventh session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), see page 91.

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On page 69 you will find our report on the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, giving a good overview of what happened there. Discussions were dominated by two issues: reform and finance. We have printed (see page 123) a collection of only the most relevant resolutions; but a complete set of all resolutions and decisions with implications for the environment is being published (under the auspices of the International Council of Environmental Law) in “International Protection of the Environment: Environment and Sustainable Development” (Oceana Publications, Inc.).

Interesting is the fact that a new environmental law programme will be drafted for UNEP in 2000. All those who perceive or can visualise what should be incorporated into such a programme should raise their voices now.

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We are not the only people very disappointed at the outcome from Cartagena (see page 84). In the Selected Documents, we are reproducing the text of the final document which did not find acceptance, and readers can acquaint themselves with the problems still to be overcome before a Biosafety Protocol can be achieved (page 138).

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The official opening of the IUCN Environmental Law Centre in Bonn took place on 24 March, and a short account of the proceedings will be included in the next issue.

- Wolfgang B. Sauer -

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