

REFERENCES TO OTHER TOPICS

OECD: Seoul Conference on Sustainable Development

Over the coming decades, most of the world's population growth and much of its economic growth will take place in developing countries. Achieving sustainable development both in these countries and at a global level will depend heavily on technological development and innovation and the widespread diffusion and application of clean technologies. However, numerous barriers stand in the way of international scientific and technological cooperation.

To address the issues facing both developed and developing countries in these areas, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Korean Ministry of Science and Technology organised a conference on "International Scientific and Technological Cooperation for Sustainable Development" in Seoul on 15–16 November, 2000.

Participants discussed ways to promote and facilitate international cooperation in the development and diffusion of environmental technologies and in particular cleaner technologies, between developed and developing countries. The aim was to identify barriers impeding effective cooperation and proposed recom-

recommendations to enhance international scientific and technological cooperation, involving both the public and private sectors and with particular attention to the needs of developing countries. The Meeting followed on from a Ministerial meeting of the OECD's Committee for Scientific and Technological Policy held in Paris in June 1999, and its results will contribute to the Organisation's work on sustainable development.

For further information contact Nicholas Bray in the OECD's Media Relations Division in Paris (Tel: 33 1 45 24 80 90, or e-mail: nicholas.bray@oecd.org).

Report of World Commission on Dams

According to a recent report by the World Commission on Dams (WCD), an independent body sponsored by the World Bank and the World Conservation Union (IUCN), although dams have delivered major benefits to more than 140 countries, they have exacted a high price in human hardship and environmental damage.

The 400-page Report calls for a new approach to planning and building dams that takes into account the needs and desires of people. The Report is the first independent, systematic assessment of large dams around the world.

The Secretary-General of the WCD said that the most fundamental negative finding was the systematic failure to account fully for the social impact dams have had on communities they displaced and on those downstream from them. He estimated that dams have displaced 40–80 million people.

The 12-member commission, which includes representatives from industry, dam owners, governments and environmentalists, also found that many dams are run inefficiently, involve cost overruns and have led to accidents and the loss of flood plains, forests, fisheries and wildlife.

The Commission recommends that large dam projects should only be approved if they meet a framework and guidelines, set out in the Report, that recognise the rights of, and assess the risks to, all interested parties.

ITLOS: Swordfish Stocks

The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, on the request of Chile and the European Community, by an Order dated 20 December 2000, formed a Special Chamber to deal with their dispute concerning the conservation and sustainable exploitation of swordfish stocks in the South-Eastern Pacific Ocean.

The Special Chamber will be called upon to decide, among other things: (1) Whether the European Community has complied with its obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to ensure conservation of swordfish in the fishing activities undertaken by vessels flying the flag of any of its member States in the high seas adjacent to Chile's exclusive economic zone; (2) Whether the Chilean Decree which purports to apply Chile's conservation measures relating to swordfish on the high seas is in breach of the United Nations Convention; and (3) Whether the "Galapagos Agreement" of 2000 was negotiated in keeping with the provisions of the UN Convention.

A judgement given by the Special Chamber will be considered as rendered by the full Tribunal.

Article 15 of the Statute of the Tribunal provides for the formation of a Special Chamber, if so requested by the parties to a dispute. The composition of the Chamber is determined by the Tribunal, with the approval of the parties.

The Order of the Tribunal fixed the time limits for the submission of preliminary objection and of the written pleadings of both Parties.

Danger to European Soil Resources

A new report by the European Environment Agency and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) states that the degradation of Europe's vital soil resources will continue and even accelerate unless prompt action is taken now. "The sustainable use of soils is one of Europe's greatest environmental, social and economic challenges, the UNEP Executive Director said.

The Report, "Down to earth: Soil degradation and sustainable development in Europe: A challenge for the XXI century", was released on 20 December 2000, on the margins of the annual meeting of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. It states that in some parts of Europe, soil degradation is so severe that it has reduced the soil's capacity to support human communities and ecosystems and has resulted in desertification.

For more information contact michael.williams@unep.ch.

Global Warming

On 22 January 2001, the world's leading climate scientists sounded an urgent warning about the threat posed by global warming in the report by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Several hundred experts and government reviewers gathered in Shanghai from 17–20 January to approve the final wording of the 1000-page document and its summary. Known as the IPCC's Third Assessment Report, it predicts an increase in surface temperatures of between 1.5°C and 5.8°C by 2100. A previous IPCC assessment in 1995 estimated that the increase would be between 1°C and 3.5°C. The report also goes further than previous studies in pinning the blame for global warming on greenhouse gas emissions and states that "new and stronger evidence [exists] that most of the observed warming of the last 50 years is attributable to human activities".

Espoo Convention

The second meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention on environmental impact in the transboundary context will be held in Sofia, Bulgaria, on 26–27 February 2001.

On 23 November 2000, the European Commission adopted a draft recommendation for a Council Decision authorising it to negotiate, on behalf of the European Community, amendments to the Convention.

The Working Group established at the first meeting of the Parties in 1998, examined the results of the actions of the working plan, which had been drawn up there, and proposed a series of amendments to the Convention. In accordance with Article 300 of the Treaty, the European Commission accordingly requested the Council of the EU, in a proposal for a decision which it has just adopted, to provide it with authority to negotiate such amendments to the Convention on behalf of the Community, at the second meeting of the parties and in the Working Group which will be created for this purpose.

WTO/UNEP: Early Warning Mechanism

The head of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have issued a joint call for improved cooperation between the two bodies. This would include the establishment of an "early warning mechanism" to avoid disputes involving conflicting obligations under multilateral trade and environment agreements.

UNEP: Fisheries Subsidies Reform

In February 2001, UNEP will convene a fisheries subsidies reform workshop, which will aim to build understanding and consensus on policy reforms in that sector, contributing to the sustainable development of fisheries. A comprehensive approach is envisaged through a combination of research work, country studies and policy dialogue.

A technical workshop will be held on 12 February, between governments, international organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), experts, and policy- and decision-makers in Geneva. The workshop is being organised in close collaboration with the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Invitations to participate have been extended to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and relevant NGOs.

Further information on the workshop is available from Hussein Abaza, Chief, Economics and Trade Unit, UNEP, Geneva (e-mail: husein.abaza@unep.ch).

Climate Change: "May spark future wars"

Strategists at the UK's Ministry of Defence, studying 30 years ahead as to what might cause conflict, have predicted that future wars could be fought over water resources and the effects of global warming.

The rise in global temperatures will cause floods, agricultural changes, disease and natural disasters. Two-thirds of the world's population could be short of fresh water by 2025. As such factors could cause more conflict, the Ministry of Defence needs to predict the manpower it will have to recruit.

Whitehall strategists have also considered how wars might be shaped by new technology as well as social and political factors.

