

REFERENCES TO OTHER TOPICS

Wadden Sea

The Ninth Trilateral Governmental Conference on the Protection of the Wadden Sea agreed on 31 October 2001 to apply for an internationally recognised designation, aimed at protecting a common environmental ecosystem. At the same time, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands pledged to work toward strengthening trilateral measures to protect the area's marine and coastal areas.

The Meeting also discussed future actions related to ship access and safety, fisheries protection and promotion, and the goal of establishing uniform regulatory environmental standards across the Wadden Sea area.

The Wadden Sea includes about 900,000 hectares of marsh, tidal flats, waterways and sand dunes. The area comprises 26 islands and contains one of Europe's largest wetlands.

The three countries agreed to submit a joint application to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) that, if successful, would designate the Wadden Sea a "particularly sensitive sea area (PSSA)". This designation would, *inter alia*, give the countries authority to restrict use of the waterway, such as limit oil tanker access. An IMO spokesperson has said that the waterway meets all PSSA-designation requirements. Only the Great Barrier Reef in Australia and the Sabana Camaguey in Cuba, currently have this designation.

No agreement was reached on whether to apply to designate the area a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Opposition from some quarters to World Heritage designation stems from resource-use restrictions that would be introduced if the Sea gained this designation.

The meeting also agreed to establish a Trilateral Wadden Sea Forum, which will be comprised of municipal officials, scientists, members of non-governmental organisations and environmental experts who will draft recommendations on how to promote sustainable development within the area, taking into consideration social, economic, and environmental concerns.

More information is available at <http://cwss.www.de/>.

EU

– Directive on Renewable Energy

The European Directive aimed at promoting electricity generated by renewable energy sources entered into force on 27 October 2001 with its publication in the Official Journal of the EU (L 283). The Member States now have two years to transpose the provision on to national statutes.

Directive 2001/77/EC of 27 September 2001 obliges Member States to publish indicative national objectives within a year for future consumption of electricity produced from renewable sources. The Member States have two years to establish systems guaranteeing the origin of green electricity. By 27 October 2003 they should also have published a report assessing any obstacles to raising the production of green electricity. By the same deadline, obstacles to network access, notably at the level of transmission and distribution network managers, should have been broken down.

– Dangerous Substances

The Commission has published a recommendation on the risk reduction strategy for a series of dangerous substances. This recommendation was adopted on 7 November 2001, in applying the Regulation to the evaluation and control of risks caused by existing substances, and is designed to guarantee that industrially produced chemical substances are produced, used and disposed of in a totally safe manner. This third recommendation in the series constitutes a synthesis of the results of risk evaluation and recommended risk reduction measures for five existing substances: acrylaldehyde (C₃H₄O); dimethyl sulphate (C₂H₆O₄S); nonylphenol, phenol, 4-nonyl-, branched (C₁₅H₂₄O); tert-butyl methyl ether (C₆H₁₄O).

The proposed risk reduction measures constitute professional exposure limits, to confirm with EU legislation for workers' protection from acrylaldehyde and dimethyl sulphate. For nonylphenol, phenol, 4-nonyl-, branched, the Commission recommends restrictions to their use in many sectors where these substances are currently widely used. For other sectors, the application of anti-pollution measures (IPCC Directive) and other community instruments, such as the framework Directive on water, should be ap-

plied to ensure that the amount of the two substances in the environment is controlled. Finally, the Commission advocates surveillance programmes for the early detection of underground water contaminants by tert-butyl methyl ether (MTBE). At the European level, these programmes should use the best available techniques for the construction and use of underground storage installations, for petrol distribution in service stations and for harmonised technical norms, drawn up by the Committee on the Environment (CEN), for the construction and use of storage facilities. Furthermore, an appeals system against authorisations granted under the IPCC Directive is proposed in order to gauge levels of MTBE in groundwater in water containers.

– Environmental Law Experts

The European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL), which brings together the environmental inspectors of the EU member countries and Commission experts, held its biannual meeting from 5-7 December 2001 in Namur, Belgium.

The Network was created in 1992, to monitor the implementation and enforcement of environmental law in the European Union. The Network meets once under each EU presidency. Two standing committees manage IMPEL's continuing activities, and its secretariat is housed in Commission offices in Brussels.

EU/ACP: Renewable Energy Sources

The report on the use of renewable energy sources in ACP (African/Caribbean/ Pacific) countries has welcomed the Commission's decision to hold regional seminars on the use of renewable energy sources for the competent decision-making bodies in the ACP countries, in order to prepare the way for a substantial increase in projects concerned with sustainable energy supplies.

It also focused on the outcome of the "Sustainable Energy Seminar for ACP Island States, within the Framework of Development Co-operation" held on 26-27 June 2001 in Santo Domingo, and endorsed its conclusions.

EP: Disappointed with Sanctions

The European Parliament's Environment Committee has prepared a draft resolution criticising the uneven application of European texts protecting the environment. The resolution was drafted on the initiative of Caroline Jackson (PPE, UK) who on 6 November 2001 asked for a decision to be made by the Heads of State during the Laeken Summit in December, in order to clarify a legislative framework for penal sanctions to be applied by the Member States.

With this resolution, the Parliament supports the Commission's proposal for a Directive and is opposed, together with the Commission, to the Council's proposal for a framework decision. The Parliament hopes to take part in the legislative process as part of the co-decision procedure.

The report criticises Member States for their lack of resolve regarding the fight against illegal tipping, the risks of major environmental accidents or the contamination of drinking water. According to the Environment Committee, these offences are not sufficiently punished at a penal level by the Member States. In addition, it emphasises the uneven application of Community texts by Member States on the matter.

In its draft resolution, the Committee calls for the adoption of penal sanctions by all Member States so that these offenders can be prosecuted.

Latvia: Danger to Baltic Salmon

The plan to construct a dam on the river Salaca, at the town of Staicele, 100 kilometres to the north of Riga, has met with stiff opposition from the local population and environmental organisations.

Supporters of the dam, in the heart of the Vidzeme natural reserve, stress the necessity of such a project. As a result of current law, the national electricity provider has to pay a very high set price to the electricity producer, while respecting the ozone layer. Also, the dam construction project is a last chance to earn the funding necessary for proposed health schemes and future employment.

In Latvia, several rivers support wild salmon populations, which then begin their journey to the sea. According to the Latvian

Institute for Research on Fishing, the existence of wild salmon is vitally important for the whole of the Baltic Sea, as this fish is resistant to M74, a mysterious illness which decimated the Baltic salmon population in the mid-1990s and which now threatens it once more. About 85 per cent of Baltic salmon today are farmed.

The Staicele dam, as well as 165 other dams that could be built across Latvia by councils or businessmen seeking money for well-intentioned projects, risks leading to the demise of the Baltic wild salmon. Current levels of pollution and other dams on rivers flowing into the Baltic Sea have already considerably reduced the salmon population.

Africa

A ministerial-level meeting on African development, organised by the Japanese Government, the World Bank, the UN and the Global Coalition for Africa (GCA) met in Tokyo on 3 December 2001.

The meeting was part of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development and was the first meeting to discuss the New African Initiative, a development programme drawn up by African nations.

China: Environmental Laws

The Government has announced that officials are working on several new “enabling” laws that would significantly expand

the country’s environmental, health and safety regulations. A law on environmental impact assessment is currently being drafted and the final draft of a far-reaching clean production law is being examined.

A spokesperson from the State Economic and Trade Commission (SETC) recently said that environmental protection in China is at a critical stage, because the sector is dependent on laws and regulations that are still developing and are not yet effectively enforced. So far, enforcement has been the responsibility of local environmental protection bureaux, whose effectiveness is hampered by the fact that they are under the control of local authorities, who often work to protect certain industry sectors. “Political realities” are said to discourage lawmakers from addressing issues such as transparency and property rights. The latter, although not directly environmental, are still central to supporting an effective environmental regulatory regime. But it is recognised that there is no short-term possibility for change in this regard.

The SETC is now leading an initiative to establish “clean production sites” in ten major cities and along a small number of major rivers and lakes. The Clean Production Law will set up a series of voluntary initiatives backed by an incentive regime including provisions for government subsidies, project approval recommendations and tax relief. Some critics say that the law will be impractical and difficult to enforce, because it was devised without significant input from industry.

