

EDITORIAL

This first issue of 2004 is again full of information. But as we have already mentioned, it is quite difficult to cover all the developments we deem important and sometimes we have problems in making a choice. However, our readers know that we have offered many times that, if they feel something important is missing or additional information is needed, they can always ask us and we shall gladly try to supply this.

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It was with pleasure that we read the statement of the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan that “every country has a responsibility to move from an era of exploitation of the environment to an ethic of stewardship”. To this, we have nothing to add.

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We were not surprised to hear from UNEP that weather-related natural disasters in 2003 had cost the world billions. However, we were surprised that UNEP is calling on Governments, business and industry to promote emissions-trading markets as one way of tackling the crisis linked to climate change.

An acknowledgement for UNEP’s latest achievements is that its Executive Director, Prof. Klaus Töpfer is increasingly winning recognition for his competence, not only within the framework of his present responsibilities, but also in a wider international context. He is being promoted by quite a number of prominent people as a candidate for the next President of Germany.

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There are only a few – mainly two States – who are satisfied with the outcome of the Milan conference (see page 24). One is probably waiting until the price is right to act; the other may never do so.

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The 32nd Conference of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation has voted a budget appropriation of \$749 million dollars (a cut of \$51 million) to carry out its work in 2004–5. We noted in particular that delegates also called for intensified action to combat illegal fishing and for increased support for small island developing States.

FAO usually had Directors-General appointed for many years, but the Conference also decided that from 2005 on, the term should be six years, renewable only once for four years.

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In the “References” section we have announced several appointments at the top of international organisations. Here, we would like to add the name of Leonard Good from Canada, who has been appointed the new Chairman of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). We will miss Mohamed El-Ashry, but we are very pleased with the choice of successor and wish him all success. We have known him for many years as a trustee of the Canadian Elizabeth Haub Foundation for Environmental Law and Policy.

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- Wolfgang R. Sauer -