

EDITORIAL

One cannot open a newspaper these days without reading of climate change. Some island residents fear their homes are disappearing. Glaciers are melting too fast. Concerns for the Arctic region are increasing.

Beside the meetings of the Arctic Council, the German Foreign Minister held an internationally attended meeting to address the arctic issue (p. 104) where representatives of the concerned states again indicated their view that there is no need to negotiate a new regime for the Arctic. A repeated theme of the discussion was the coordinated implementation of existing international instruments world-wide. This was supplemented by numerous interventions expressing hope for a changed US policy (especially regarding UNCLOS and climate agreements).

President Obama has issued a supportive statement on the Law of the Sea, but not much has happened in the US Senate, to date.

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A new process has been commenced by Oliver Dulić, President of the UNEP Governing Council, focussed on developing options for reforming international environmental governance in the UN system. A high-level consultative group has been appointed to provide final proposals, which will be presented to the UNGA by 2010, as part of the "Roadmap" on environmental governance (UNEP-GC Dec. 25/4, discussed on p. 80).

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Nobody expected that the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon would become so personally involved in the climate change issue, which he has taken up as a primary focus of much of his work. His general environmental orientation is well timed, as it is widely expected that a new UN Summit – "Rio +20" – will be called, which will include environmental governance reform as one of its primary foci.

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To balance the optimism expressed in the previous paragraphs, we note that the 5th World Water Forum was not able to agree to a common goal for coordinated action on internationally agreed concerns.

27 March 2009

- Wolfgang R. S. -