

EDITORIAL

The most recent predictions from the UN indicate that the world population will increase by over 3 billion people by 2050. Existing problems can only be exacerbated by this horrendous increase.

*

*

*

This year, the US has changed its stance regarding the UN Human Rights Council. The former administration had declined to cooperate, but this year, the US was elected as one of the five “new” members added to the Council.

In this connection, the Chinese Government, reelected to membership, submitted a list of pledges and commitments regarding its promotion and protection of human rights (UN Doc A/63/840).

*

*

*

In the area of climate change, the US appears to be rejoining the international community in its commitment to find ways to address this shared challenge. Messages describing its new climate change policy are not completely clear. The New York Times challenges the Obama Administration as “slow to act”, while Secretary of State Clinton is quoted as saying that the US is keen to take the “lead in the international negotiations”. President Obama launched a “climate forum” of 16 major economies to promote achievement of a new agreement.

High officers in international forums have cited the US’s participation as a primary factor behind their expectation that the new Kyoto agreement will not be signed this year. The US has not yet offered concrete positions, presumably waiting for the outcome of national discussions in Congress.

Following the latest negotiations in the Copenhagen climate process (page 136), the 27 EU Member States found a consensus position concerning a financial mechanism for assistance to developing and transition countries.

*

*

*

Sometimes, change is more challenging than original policy decision-makers expect.

Several years ago, despite international agreement that DDT should be banned, many developed countries returned to production of the pesticide for export to developing countries, where it is necessary for malaria reduction. As noted inside at page 180 (Stockholm (POPs) Convention, COP 4), however, the world has now developed potential solutions which will finally allow phasing out of the pesticide entirely. WHO is organising a US \$40 million project to test solutions in 40 countries.

Recent studies in the Alps have identified high levels of DDT there, although its use in Europe has been forbidden for decades.

*

*

*

According to the University of Zurich’s World Glacier Monitoring Service, glaciers are melting much faster than expected. The experts note, however, small increases of glacier size on Scandinavian and North American coastlines.

24 June 2009

- Wolfgang B. S. -