

# EDITORIAL

*Ambassador Bagher Asadi (Iran), an outstanding diplomat and Laureate of the Elizabeth Haub Award for Environmental Diplomacy, was arrested in his own country on 12 March. He is currently detained in solitary confinement in the Evin Prison. Both the present Foreign Minister and his predecessor have gone public in Asadi's defense. As an unbiased and skilled diplomat, Bagher Asadi served as Permanent Representative of Iran to the United Nations where he was a member and chair of numerous committees and working groups, including Chair of the Second Committee and Co-Chair of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF). He also chaired the Group of 77 in New York and recently concluded a post as Director at the G-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation. Asadi has devoted himself to efforts aimed at developing environmental law and sustainable development discourse and promoting its influence at the global and regional levels. We hope to see Ambassador Asadi at the next International Symposium of Laureates of the Elizabeth Haub Prizes this fall. He had already confirmed his attendance prior to this sad occurrence.*

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*We have to wonder about the motives behind the delay in the US Senate's confirmation of the nomination of Gina McCarthy to lead the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Prior to hearings before the Environment and Public Works Committee, McCarthy received over 1000 written questions from that Committee's Republican members, who thereafter boycotted its hearings, claiming to be waiting for her full response. The move delayed for a week that Committee's decision advancing her nomination to a vote of the full Senate, giving rise to expectations that Senate Republicans will use other parliamentary procedures to delay or block confirmation. In the meantime, Deputy Administrator Bob Perciasepe is serving as EPA's acting Administrator.*

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*Since the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty last April, further action has been called for in the form of a global moratorium on the testing, production and use of armed robots. This move has received growing support, but might have little chance of success, especially considering the behaviour of some States in the Syrian conflict. Considering other examples, Christof Heyns, UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary and Arbitrary Executions, in his recent annual report to the Human Rights Council, noted in general that preparations to introduce armed robots raised "far-reaching concerns about the protection of life during war and peace".*

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*In accordance with the decision taken at the first universal session of the UNEP Governing Council (EPL 43(2), at 62), the UN General Assembly has approved the re-designation of the Governing Council as the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) (A/RES/67/251). The first session of the UNEA will be held in Nairobi, Kenya, 23–27 June, 2014.*

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*UNEP Executive Director, Achim Steiner, appeared before the UN Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) on 22 May 2013, detailing the UN Secretary-General's first proposal to substantially increase UNEP's regular budget since 1978. The full text of Steiner's remarks is reproduced in the Selected Documents section of this issue on page 177.*

12 June 2013

*- Wolfgang Breyer -*