The Conference noted that programmes such as the Earth Charter, Local Agenda 21, the National Council for Sustainable Development, and Leadership for Environment and Development (LEAD) play important roles in finding innovative ways to build this capacity.

It is intended to bring the conclusions and recommendations to the attention of the broad community of individuals and organisations contributing to the global goals of environmental protection and sustainable development at local, national, and international levels. In particular, it is expected that these conclusions and recommendations for action shall be used at and will contribute to, “Rio + 10” in the year 2002, the next comprehensive review by the UN General Assembly of progress in the implementation of Agenda 21, and will also be used in the international preparatory processes for this review.

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**REGIONAL AFFAIRS**

### Latin America

**Environment Council Approved**

At a meeting of environment ministers from Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia, held in Cartagena, Colombia, in connection with an Andean Pact summit to celebrate 30 years of the accord, it was agreed to form an Advisory Council of Ministers to strengthen cooperative efforts to protect the environment.

The advisory council will formulate joint programmes for environmental protection, promote the exchange of information, and work out a joint position among the pact countries regarding major international environmental issues. One of the most pressing issues for the new council is to establish a common front on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

Ministers agreed to intensify efforts to strengthen regional programmes of environmental management in order to boost the process of economic and political integration among member countries. One of these programmes, an existing agreement on Non-Returnable Technical Cooperation, financed by the Inter-American Development Bank and directed toward strategies for the protection of biodiversity in the Andes, will be restructured, and ministers will decide on proposed reforms at the next summit of Andean environment ministers, later this year in Bolivia.

It was decided to create a series of national workshops to refine data banks and the computerized exchange of information on ecosystems. Dependent on financing from the Andean Promotion Corporation, the pact’s semi-autonomous development bank, the countries hope to consolidate their data banks into a single information system.

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### EU

**Water: Difficulties with Framework Directive**

In March 1999, the EU Council of Ministers adopted a common position on a proposal to promote a genuine EU water policy, which it was hoped could be speedily finalised and forwarded to the European Parliament.

Progress has now been postponed, so the common position will not be forwarded to the Parliament before September and that newly-elected body is unlikely to consider the matter before October. This means that there will be no second-reading vote before November or December. It will therefore be the job of the Portuguese Presidency to take up this matter in the first half of next year.

At the moment, the main difficulties are:

- The price of water: Article 12 of the proposal contemplates a process for recovering the cost of services. The problem here is that no Member State currently makes consumers pay the real price. In most countries, the farming industry gets its water free of charge and to change this situation would, inter alia, obviously affect the cost of the Common Agricultural Policy.
- International obligations: How to use a Community proposal to reflect its international obligations (for example, under OSPAR and the North Sea Conventions, involv-