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.

### 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.

#### 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-
ing a total phase out of dumping dangerous substances at sea by 2020). The Parliament wants these commitments to be turned into an obligation in the Framework Directive. The Member States still cannot agree on this matter.

- Period for implementing the Directive and exemptions: The Council agreed on a maximum of 19 years for implementing the Directive in full, whereas the Commission, backed by the Parliament, proposed 12 years.
- Extensively modified bodies of water: The Commission proposed incorporating these into the Directive so as to return to the most natural situation possible. It now has to be decided what is meant exactly by extensively modified bodies of water (channelled rivers) and determine which bodies might have been or may be involved.

The Council and the Parliament disagree strongly about this issue, with the MEPs wanting the Directive to cover a series of stretches of water that the Member States do not want to be included.

Environment Council

Following is a summary of the political agreements and decisions reached by EU Environment Ministers at their meeting on 24 June 1999 in Luxembourg:

Noise Emissions

The Ministers were successful in working out a political agreement in anticipation of a common position on the proposal for a Council and European Parliament Directive concerning the approximation of national legislation on sound emissions from machines used outside buildings.

The proposal aims to replace nine specific Directives establishing strict standards for noise emissions from around fifty items of machinery with a single piece of legislation. Existing EU legislation covers only a few types of construction machinery and lawn mowers. The new legislation will cover equipment such as cement mixers, drills, rollers, dumpers and waste skips, and aims to guarantee the free movement of goods within the European Union and to protect public health and well-being.

Chemicals

Following a policy debate on the future Community strategy on chemicals, Ministers adopted Conclusions calling on the Commission to base its work on this strategy on the precautionary principle.

The Council also called on the Commission to ensure that the strategy constitutes a coherent and effective body of legislation covering the risks dangerous substances and preparations pose to human health and the environment. It was stressed that the Strategy will also need to place ultimate responsibility for the drafting and submission of risk assessment data on dangerous chemicals with producers, importers and user industries. These should also be required to provide adequate information for consumers and users.

It was also noted that the strategy would need to clarify the respective responsibilities of those entrusted with risk assessment and those responsible for risk management.

Emissions from Tractors

Ministers arrived at a political agreement with a view to a common position on the proposal for a Council and European Parliament Directive on measures to combat polluting gas and particulate emissions from engines designed for the propulsion of farm and forestry tractors, amending Council Directive 74/150/EEC.

LIFE

Agreement was reached on the budget for the LIFE financial instrument for the environment for the period from 2000–2004.

The Commission had proposed Euro 613 million and the European Parliament Euro 850 million. A majority of Member States was in favour of the Commission figure. Three States supported the Parliament proposal and a further three wished for a Europe 580 million budget.

Vehicle Recycling

Ministers decided again to postpone adopting a common position on the draft Directive concerning end-of-life vehicles: A decision which came at the end of lengthy and ill-tempered discussions.

The problem was the proposal for old cars to be taken back to be dismantled and recycled at the manufacturer’s expense. Strong opposition came from the car industry because of the expense involved. The German car industry, which accounts for 40 per cent of current car production, says that to apply this Directive to the German industry would be an unacceptable financial burden.

The German Government announced before the Council meeting that it could not vote for the draft directive, thereby pre-empting any debate. The matter has now been postponed until October 1999, and in the meantime, experts will assess possible amendments tabled by Martin Bartenstein, the Austrian Environment Minister, which set different deadlines for taking back vehicles free of charge, and reflect the dates vehicles are first put on the road.

Waste Incineration

Ministers approved the draft Directive and reached a political agreement so that all waste will shortly be covered by a single piece of legislation setting the conditions and standards for incineration. The proposal is being prepared for formal adoption in the form of a com-