

EDITORIAL

Readers will remember that we promised to report regularly on developments in the Environmental Law Action Plan from Montevideo (see *Environmental Policy and Law*, 8 (1), 1982, pp. 2 and 31). One such development is a resolution passed on 17 December 1982, calling upon countries to control the export of products such as pharmaceuticals and pesticides banned for domestic consumption or sale, unless requests for such products are explicitly endorsed or allowed by importing countries. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 146 in favour and 1 against (USA), with no abstentions. This was the result of many weeks of intense negotiations between representatives of developing countries, who co-sponsored the resolution, and delegates from the major Western industrialized and Eastern bloc countries. The resolution — it will be printed in *Selected Documents* in the next issue — also calls upon the Secretary-General to prepare a report on a consolidated list of products which had been banned, severely restricted, withdrawn, or for drugs, not approved, by December 1983. This vote, and the vote against the *World Charter For Nature*, confirmed international opinion that the USA, until recently the leader in the environmental field, is now doing an about face under the present administration. Increasingly, it is the developing countries who are contributing to progress in these fields, and it is the hope of all — expressed by the Venezuelan delegate after the recent vote — that US opposition to the adopted measures will not lead them to boycott implementation of these resolutions.

Another important development is the recent decision by the OECD Council requiring that sufficient information be available to ensure that the potential health and environmental effects of chemicals can be assessed before they are placed on the market. This decision, concerning the "Minimum Pre-Marketing Set of Data (MPD)", was adopted following a lengthy period of negotiations and similar action in some countries. At present, 10 Member Countries already require the MPD data set and others are

taking steps to implement it through national legislation. We hope with OECD that it will serve as a "key benchmark against which countries can harmonize their legislation in chemicals".

At the supra-national level, the European Commission Working Group on toxic and dangerous waste finalized its discussions at the end of 1982. The Commission has now proposed a directive to the Council, taking into account the group's work. We shall comment on the directive in the next issue, the object of which is to provide for adequate supervision and control of the transfrontier shipment of waste within the Community from its start through to its environmentally safe treatment and disposal.

The inter-agency meeting on the follow-up to Montevideo was convened recently in Geneva. It was confirmed that Malcolm Forster (Southampton) will be the rapporteur for the subject-area waste; Peter Sand, who is moving from assistant Director-General of IUCN to UNEP, as consultant to the Environmental Law Unit, will report on the topic of chemicals; Sachiko Kuwabara (UNEP) on land-based pollution and Mateo Magarinos de Mello will undertake the first studies on soil and on emergencies.

IUCN will have a new Director-General from 1st July. He is Kenton Miller, presently director of the Centre for Strategic Wildland Management Studies and Associate Professor of Natural Resources, University of Michigan and chairman of the IUCN Commission on Protected Areas. An interview with him is planned for the near future.

Readers are no doubt aware of the publicity — which we also expected — now surrounding the US Environmental Protection Agency. This week two top EPA aides have been fired and President Reagan has named several new officials. It is rumoured that EPA Administrator Anne Gorsuch and ultimately Secretary of the Interior James Watt, may have to leave the Administration, if its environmental reputation is to be saved before the elections. A report on developments in EPA is planned for the next issue.

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