

EDITORIAL

Our practice in the past has been to publish a double issue following each UNEP Governing Council, containing not only reports on Nairobi, but also articles on other subjects. This year, in order to be able to report more quickly, we have decided to devote a single issue entirely to UNEP matters. This is especially important in the case of the thirteenth session because the decisions adopted there are the blueprint for UNEP's work in the next two years.

As you will see from the report, the next meeting is scheduled for 1987. The States representing the UN General Assembly in the Governing Council are not yet convinced that a two-year (trial) interval between meetings is the best pattern, nor have they been too favourable to the idea of increasing the influence of the Committee of Permanent Representatives — i.e., those people dealing with UNEP in the embassies in Nairobi. We shall have to wait and see.

On the whole, the Council meeting was a harmonious one with little friction, if one disregards the perennials — for example, Israel's plan to build a canal joining the Mediterranean Sea to the Dead Sea, Apartheid and the environment, and other political questions indirectly, but not directly, relevant to UNEP. There was, however, need for compromise on certain topics — for example, the follow-up to the Ozone Layer Convention.

One problem which was the subject of late discussion, only resolved in the last plenary session, was the precise wording of the shared resources section of the decisions on Environmental Law. There was concern that the text as originally proposed would have effectively removed this subject from the future agenda of UNEP. It was felt that the retention of the principles of shared resources as a major concern of UNEP was of particular importance also because of the expectations regarding the legal and policy initiatives widely anticipated from the World Commission on Environment and Development.

It is our view that the documents and proceedings of the Governing Council do not receive the recognition they deserve. Not only are the decisions not widely known, but also the extensive reports prepared for the meetings contain a great deal of valuable information not readily accessible elsewhere. Little of this material is widely available, as only the State-of-the-Environment Report (this year in a much-improved form) and the accompanying survey of the two selected topics (this time environmental aspects of emerging agricultural technologies and population and the environment), are available from UNEP on request. It is in order to redress this relative ignorance of the Governing Council's activities, that we continue our practice of devoting such extensive coverage to these activities.

In August the journal returns to its usual content.

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