

# EDITORIAL

*It has been obvious both within the European Community and without — especially among the Nordic countries — that the government of the United Kingdom has been taking a “braking” approach to several aspects of environmental policy. It has also been generally accepted that the origins of this approach were to be found in the attitude taken by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. So it was interesting to read the “environmental” comments included in her speech to the Royal Society in September, where she stated that “the Government espouses the concept of sustainable development” and similar comments during a later address.*

*Both speeches followed the publication of a Report, entitled “A Perspective by the United Kingdom on the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development” which is the first of its kind to consider officially the recommendations of the World Commission. All relevant departments of State have been invited to examine their policies in the light of the Brundtland Report and the UK response sets out the government’s thoughts on the issues raised in the Report and suggests how it considers those issues might be tackled. In Mrs. Thatcher’s words “(it) describes where we stand in the United Kingdom”... I see it also as a contribution to the Ministerial Conference which the Norwegian Government will hold in 1990 to examine what progress we have all made to safeguard ‘Our Common Future’.”*

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*We have reported several times on problems which have developed in organizations within the UN system, and in this context on the negative public image of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. We would have liked to have reported on positive developments this time, but the reforms agreed by governments for the Organization last year, are being implemented very slowly. A review of the personnel, financial and administrative policy by consulting firms (selected by Director General Edouard Saouma himself), will apparently commence only this month. The relevant reports are expected to be submitted to the Programme and Finance Committee in May 1989. The large number of highly-qualified staff who are increasingly leaving the Organization, the number of unoccupied posts, even at the highest level, and the increasing problem of attracting qualified personnel, is, in the opinion of many government representatives, a sign of increasing mismanagement and inefficiency. The one year delay in the publication of the World Nutrition Report, intended mostly for the media, is regarded as being a good gauge of the extent of the internal problems now confronting FAO. This is disturbing, as we need a strong and highly motivated FAO to ensure effective environmental policies.*

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*While writing this editorial we heard of the sudden death of Judge Nagendra Singh, President of the International Court of Justice.*

*Judge Singh was one of the founders of the International Council of Environmental Law in 1969 and has served since then as one of its Executive Governors. In addition to his many honorary appointments he was trustee of the Elizabeth Haub Foundation for the Legal Protection of the Natural Environment and the Deputy Chairman of IUCN’s Commission on Environmental Policy, Law and Administration. In his unassuming way, he gave advice and collaborated generously on innumerable occasions. His last major task was his work as a Member of the World Commission on Environment and Development where he influenced in particular the section on legal and institutional change. It was a privilege and an enrichment to have worked with Nagendra Singh. We mourn his death, and do not know how we shall fill the gap he has left.*

→ *Wolfgang Breyer*

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