

EDITORIAL

This first issue of 1990 is late. We have been trying for two months to agree on a closing date but material continued to arrive which we felt could not be held over until the next issue. Finally, we have ended up with an issue which is actually two numbers! In effect, we hope that all this information brings you up-to-date with the latest developments.

But we know already what will follow in the next issue—for example, the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which met at the beginning of February. At that Meeting, President Bush called for more research on the “uncertainty” of global warming. This speech caused much controversy, because the original version was apparently watered down by the White House Chief of Staff, John Sununu. Indeed, William Reilly, head of the Environment Protection Agency (EPA), was said by friends to be so angered by the half-hearted speech that he considered resigning.

Either as a result of the controversy or pure coincidence, Elliot Richardson, a past member of several Republican cabinets and leader of the US Law of the Sea delegation from 1987 to 1980, stated in a New York Times article on 7 February, that an institutional mechanism is needed to develop, institute and enforce regulations across national boundaries — i.e., an international treaty, modelled perhaps on the LOS Treaty, to co-ordinate and enforce action on the environment. The need for such a mechanism emerged clearly from the IPCC Meeting.

Following long and arduous discussions, the General Assembly took a decision on the 1992 Conference (see page 39). Insiders were not surprised by the “comeback” of Maurice Strong (see page 5) and it is clear that the first meeting of the Preparatory Commission for the Conference (PREPCOM), dealing with organizational matters will elect Ambassador Tommy Koh of Singapore as Chairman. The first substantive meeting of the Prepcom is planned for the Autumn in Nairobi, combined with a special session of the UNEP Governing Council. We have heard that there is no working agreement up to now between UNEP and the 1992 Secretariat, since the latter will be set up only after the first meeting of Prepcom.

Ireland has taken over the Presidency of the European Commission for the next six months. In his programme for this period, the Irish Foreign Minister said that he hoped that progress could be made on measures for dealing with nitrate pollution, the protection of habitats, water quality, hazardous waste and access to environmental information. However, the immediate priority for the Community must be for a better protection of the ozone layer.

In this regard, there will surely be a push for a radical revision of the Montreal Protocol at the International Parliamentary Conference on the Environment, to be held in Washington from 29 April to 4 May, under the chairmanship of Senator Al Gore.

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Within the Editorial, there was not a nice place to congratulate Bill Reilly on his new seat at the Cabinet round-table. But I don't wish to close without wishing him all the success he himself wishes.

Wolfgang Brune

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