

# EDITORIAL

Readers will notice that a large part of this issue is taken up with information on the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). They will also realize that the decisions made during the preparatory process will largely determine the success or failure of this landmark event, so that we want to devote as much space as possible to these issues.

Although the foundations for a programme of action for sustainable development into the twenty-first century were laid, when the Preparatory Committee for the Conference concluded its first substantive session in Nairobi on 31 August (see pages 127 and 161), the question of financing continued to be very sensitive. However, if the Conference is to have any hope of success, it is obvious that there must be some movement on this central question. (Indeed, UNEP's 1990 report on evolving environmental issues states unequivocally that "no matter is more central to protecting the world's environment than additional funding").

Bolivia, speaking for the Group of 77, said that new sources of financing must be provided on top of present levels of official development assistance, if anything was to be achieved. However, the United States and several other industrial countries disagreed, preferring bilateral funding which in the present economic climate provides more certain control.

At the same time, all acknowledge that in the coming decade, developing countries will be confronted with finding sufficient financing to pay off huge external debts while being expected to make available enough resources to protect the environment, as well as meeting the demands of their development; a combination that the industrialized countries did not have to undertake - as witnessed by the present environmental problems.

In an attempt to start the ball rolling, the Heads of UNEP, the UN Development Programme and the World Bank, have agreed to set up a three-year Global Environmental Facility, amounting to approximately \$1.25 billion, and have pledged that they will jointly help developing countries protect the global environment. Focus will be on guarding against depletion of the ozone layer, global warming, loss of biodiversity and pollution of international waters. The initiators regard the Fund as being a prototype, aimed at giving three years experience in how to handle global environmental problems.

No one knows what the actual cost of tackling such problems will be. One study prepared jointly by UNDP and the World Resources Institute, estimates that developing countries will need from \$20 billion to \$50 billion each year during the 1990s, to meet the environmental portion of their sustainable development programmes. Set against these needs, the 1.25 billion can only be seen as a symbolic gesture.

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The 18th Session of the IUCN General Assembly will be held in Perth, Australia from 28 November to 5 December. Agenda items include the draft Strategy for Antarctic Conservation, and the World Conservation Strategy for the 1990s, now entitled "Caring for the World: A Strategy for Sustainability," together with 117 draft motions for consideration by the Assembly.

A report on this, and on the 2nd World Climate Conference, which will commence work on the 29 October in Geneva, are planned for the next issue.

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