

# EDITORIAL

*The layout for this issue was completed and ready for printing while the fourth, and final, Preparatory Committee for the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was still in session in New York. As we feel that we must inform our readers, if only in summary, of developments there, a "Prepcom supplement" has been added at page 127.*

*President Bush has been accused of endangering the Rio Summit by his threat of US non-appearance and refusal to promise more environmental aid to the Third World, or to accept a climate convention with clearly set limits for emissions of greenhouse gases. It is felt that his attendance will depend on the outcome of the climate talks.*

*The last round of these international negotiations is set to begin in New York on 30 April. Before that, the United States and EC representatives have agreed to attend a meeting in Paris on 15 April, where it is hoped that the most controversial points can be cleared up before the final discussions.*

*The US delegation at Prepcom stated that "we expect to sign a legally binding climate change treaty at Rio" and that the US is "very hopeful" that a convention on biodiversity (see also page 127) will also be completed in time for the Earth Summit.*

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*The Senior Advisers to ECE Governments on Environmental and Water problems achieved excellent progress within the old East-West political framework, serving as a bridge between the two systems. Now that the situation has changed so radically, attempts are being made to adapt to the new demands. The decisions taken at the recent meeting (see also pages 111 and 112) reflect this new direction.*

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*In spite of divergent views on how to protect endangered species such as elephants, rhinos and bluefin tuna, the Secretary General of the Conference on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) held during March in Kyoto, considered it to be an over-all success. A full report is planned for the next issue, as the UNCED theme has exhausted all the space available this time!*

*— Jeffrey R. Beatty —*

30 March 1992

# EDITORIAL

*The final UNCED Prepcom finished at 5.10 am this morning. An official press conference was held yesterday, and many of the statements made then, including that by Maurice Strong, the Conference's Secretary General, contributed to the conviction that the programme for Rio had made little progress and that the Conference itself was in jeopardy.*

*How could this come about? Were the journalists totally ignorant of what could realistically be expected from this Preparatory Committee? Did the UNCED Secretariat fall short in its information duties? Or is the material too complex to be understood without some in-depth study? Whatever the case, press reports do not reflect the many hours of constructive work, the consensus achieved on many points and the understanding for the texts still in brackets.*

*The groundwork has been laid for Rio, which will now be truly a working conference - as it should be. Rio could otherwise have deteriorated into an environmental spectacle, with no other function for the high-level officials attending than show. Compromise in Rio will certainly be quicker than in New York, as the participants will not only be at the highest decision-making level, but will be more willing to agree to a political compromise where necessary. And who ever heard of a Summit where everything had been decided beforehand?*

*Another point often misunderstood, is that the UNCED Prepcom has nothing at all to do with the drafting of the two conventions on climate and biodiversity, which it is hoped can be signed at Rio. This is a totally separate process under the responsibility of the two Intergovernmental Negotiating Committees (INC), although failure to make progress on these topics is usually lumped together with any UNCED shortcomings. A further round of negotiations for both conventions is planned for May.*

*It should be acknowledged that the UNCED preparatory process has meant that even if Rio should not take place, already some success has been achieved. People have learnt much from each other, many contacts have been made and the complexity of the problems has finally been faced. There is a completely different atmosphere now than at Prepcom I. The atmosphere is not only less confrontational but geared to compromise. This was also the case on the last night, apart from the usual exchanges between the Palestinians and Israel. Indeed, Chairman Tommy Koh tried (unsuccessfully) to find a bigger room for the plenary session, to seat all those wishing to attend.*

*Much has been made of the fact that there was no agreement on the financial questions. However, what is not generally known is that all the statements made spoke of the good will evident in this question and that an agreement was on the point of being reached. However, as square brackets have no place in a financial paper, agreement on the actual amounts has been left open until Rio.*

*The expectation is that the North will end up agreeing to make an extra \$3-\$6 billion available for Third World aid specifically tied to environmental goals. But it will insist that the money be channelled through an existing institution, such as the Global Environmental Facility (GEF).*

*Although these figures fall short of what the Secretary-General is looking for, as a concession, the North may also agree to give the Third World a greater say in how the GEF spends its money.*

*A meeting of "Eminent Persons" will take place in Tokyo, from 15-17 April. Maurice Strong emphasized the importance of this meeting, while the G77 Chairman and others played it down. The Mexican Ambassador stated that there had been too much confusion over the meeting.*

*"There will be a meeting of personalities to discuss certain issues connected to finance. We have received assurances that the decisions we are going to take here in Prepcom are not linked to those in Japan. They are not tied at all". The G77 Chairman stressed that the Tokyo meeting "is independent of the UNCED process, ...but hopefully it would make a contribution of some kind".*

*We hope that this meeting, together with the Munich G7 Summit and the annual meeting of the Bretton Woods Institutes (World Bank and IMF), will make it more likely that the remaining issues concerning financing will be solved.*

*At the request of the Islamic League, the Prepcom passed a resolution to postpone the start of the Rio Conference from the originally scheduled 1-12 June to 3-14 June, to avoid conflict with the Moslem Feast of Eid-ui-Adha.*

*The following pages give a summary of what will be going to Rio, although readers of this journal will mostly be interested in the results of Working Group III. A special UNCED issue of the Journal is planned for July, when we shall be able to judge whether the results have been worth the enormous effort.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jeffrey R. Berry". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line through the middle of the letters. There are short horizontal dashes at the beginning and end of the signature.

*New York, 4 April 1992.*