

# EDITORIAL

*A year after Rio, and four months into the era of a new Executive Director, everyone was curious to see how the United Nations Environment Programme would develop, and especially how the Governing Council would be run.*

*First, it must be said that delegates were full of praise for the organisation of the Meeting. Papers for this session were given another format, and many more documents were delivered on time.*

*Some general statements, while reiterating past complaints especially from Latin American countries, that they had not been sufficiently recognised by UNEP, acknowledged that the situation now seemed to be changing.*

*Readers will see in the Report that the setting of priorities was the most crucial point. The difficult road to consensus, from the first draft, and the proposal by the developing countries, until the final compromise, was a long one. This does not mean that future discussions can now be avoided : Several of the same items will come up for consideration in the Sustainable Development Commission.*

*The other subject which took up quite a considerable time was that concerning UNEP's involvement in Agenda 21. The great number of resolutions adopted maybe a surprise, but is mainly the result of the changed procedure which meant that everything agreed in the Sessional Committees had to be put before the negotiating group before going to Plenary.*

*It was generally expected that Nitin Desai, UN-Under Secretary General responsible for the Commission on Sustainable Development, would come to Nairobi. Instead, he sent a message (see page 131), which was read out by the Executive Director. Many delegates speculated that it was not the pressure of time which had hindered his attendance, but rather the question of protocol.*

*On the whole, the Meeting was a constructive one - but still a retreat from the promises made by many States, not only at the last Governing Council but also at Rio, to strengthen UNEP, and which still has not been fulfilled.*

*The priority paper refers to a budget of between US\$ 120 - 130 million (last time discussion was over 230 million). The tendency seems to lean more to US\$ 120. This led to a question in Plenary as to what the Executive Director would do if the budget expectations were not fulfilled.*

*Many delegates felt that Ms. Dowdeswell is the right person at the right time to fulfil what she calls "her new vision", and this phrase and what it involves, was taken up in many of the statements.*

*We feel that the most important thing necessary, is to really test all the fine promises made by the States, otherwise the implementation of Agenda 21 will turn out to be a castle in the air.*

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*As in past years, we have again taken seriously the reporting of the Governing Council, albeit at the cost of other topics. But this double issue should not give the impression of neglecting other areas of equal importance. The next issue, which will deal mainly with the outcome of the Commission on Sustainable Development, will try to redress this balance.\**

2 June 1993



*\* We have just received the keynote address by Vice-President Al Gore to the Commission on 14 June. See page 183.*