

# EDITORIAL

After the experience of the first session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), when much of the time was spent arranging the work programme, thus leaving insufficient time for substantive work, participants were curious to see how the Commission would approach its task this session. At the same time, it was recognised that both the inter-sessional work and the preparations would be of great importance - and they did, in fact, bring more than expected.

Thanks to the hard work of a team under the leadership of the Chairman and his Vice-Chairmen, two leading the Working Groups and the other, Namibian Ambassador Tunguru Huaraka, who negotiated difficult questions (and for this reason is not named in our report), the work of the Commission was very focused.

The High-Level Segment was not what the participants from the first CSD session had expected or hoped for: There had been consensus then that a real dialogue should develop between the environment ministers and high officials. Some speakers at the last session had stated that it would be an advantage if all written statements could be confiscated at the entrance hall ! The result: There were some spontaneous statements, questions and remarks, provoked by the Chairman, who appealed several times for a different approach in keeping with the promises made last time, and these proved to be what was hoped for; but by and large, we had to listen to a number of statements, read as prepared and longer than the agreed speaking time, since nothing could be confiscated ! So hopes are pinned on the next session.

However, these general remarks are in no way meant as a critic of what the CSD achieved. Anyone reading the report will immediately have the impression that nearly all the delegates were trying their best to achieve progress. And, surprise, surprise, this is also for the first time reflected formally in the final statement of the NGOs. Even in the short extract, as in all other cases, this positive attitude can be seen. The results of the session were generally welcomed, even if States did not achieve everything they would ideally have hoped for. All realised, and the NGOs understood, the various constraints imposed from the capitals.

The atmosphere was good throughout, due in no small way to the restless personal involvement of Chairman Klaus Töpfer. This Chairman set standards which a successor will not find easy to uphold.

I can claim to have attended the important meetings concerning environmental policy and law themes and so feel competent to judge the quality of a meeting and its chairman. When Töpfer was chosen, irrespective of his intellectual capacities, I had my doubts if he could pull off such a difficult task in a language not his own and without the same intimate knowledge of the UN machinery as the permanent representatives in New York. A further complication was that he is a member of the German Federal Parliament, an active Minister of the Environment and the head of his party in one State, so he had to commute home to a country where 16 elections at different levels are being fought this year. In addition, the election of the German President also occurred during the session, and since no proxy is allowed, he had to return for the vote. But as everything was so well organised, his absence was not a disturbing factor. Finally, stress and the effects of living day and night with air-conditioning, almost cost him his voice. Advice and medicines for this condition were received from delegations of all continents, which led to the remark that he was undoubtedly the best informed and equipped for this kind of complaint! The Chairman applied his knowledge, enthusiasm, patience - and, above all, his sensitivity - to the success of the meeting and my scepticism was proved wrong.

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This year we had to report on very many developments. Since the volume increased so much we had to speak to our publisher. He proved to be generous : So if needed, we will have more pages and our readers will have the advantage. But this, of course, means the workload has also increased.

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With the amount of material the Journal is offering, everyone has difficulties referring back to what has been published.

We realise that for a Journal like ours, it is not sufficient to print merely a register with titles and authors, and that a more extensive one should be available. While we do not promise that we will fulfil all wishes, including our own, we hope that a trial we have just begun - the first results of which you will see as an index for this year - will be successful .

- Wolfgang Breyer -

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