

EDITORIAL

We are happy that we can bring a report on the Cairo Population Conference already in this issue (see page 309). It is written by the lawyer who represented ICEL at the meeting, so the negotiations and ultimate outcome are seen through his eyes, perhaps a different standpoint from the media coverage.

We expect that the Fourth World Conference on Women next year will ensure a sensible follow-up without too much male influence.

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There will be many more international decision making meetings in the coming months, too numerous to list here and which include the present session of the UN General Assembly and the inauguration of the Law of the Sea Convention. We have noted them and promise to report as quickly as possible.

At the moment, we foresee problems in connection with the World Social Summit. In the preparatory papers, the term "environment" is used to refer to many areas, but not to the natural environment. This had been included in the earlier draft and we do not know why it has now been dropped: We cannot understand how social development is to be improved without considering the impact of the natural environment. There are now initiatives - also through ICEL - to change this situation, but we are not in a position to judge the possible success of these.

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The discussion is still continuing in New York concerning the collaboration of NGOs in the UN system, and there is not yet anything to report.

The UN/ECE Committee in charge of preparations for the next Ministerial Conference in Sofia, has not yet decided if the prepared draft on access and participation of NGOs will be forwarded to the Conference.

In another area, the United States tried and failed in September at a GATT Council Meeting, to have NGOs co-opted into its discussions. The US delegate stressed that "non-transparent proceedings perpetuate a fortress image of the GATT and diminish public confidence in and support for the work of the WTO." The massive opposition to the US initiative was seen by the developing country delegates as evidence that industrialised States are not interested in giving the environment a hearing at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which will take over from GATT in 1995.

On the positive side, the Council of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has now agreed for NGOs "to observe meetings". The Chairman, Mohamed El-Ashry, stated that public participation was needed to make global environmental projects inspired by the GEF successful.

Taking into account these developments, it is clear that GATT/WTO will not be able to block indefinitely the inclusion of the NGO expertise on trade and the environment. In this connection we have to congratulate UNCTAD again (see last issue on page 280) for its decision.

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The International Green Cross, whose aim is to channel funds from the private sector to environmental projects, mainly in Russia, has reorganised its management structure. Under its Chairman, former Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev, the Geneva office will be the sole headquarters.

The offices in The Hague and Moscow will remain as representative of national chapters of the Organisation, and the legal seat of the Green Cross will remain in The Hague.

- Wolfgang Breyer -

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