

EDITORIAL

The First Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (See page 144), which started by expecting nothing and then was pleasantly surprised, illustrates that all Parties now recognise the importance of reducing climate relevant gases beyond the year 2000 and that they are willing to negotiate further. The next COP will have to produce concrete results and the negotiation process will clearly be a difficult one right up to 1997. However, by accepting the Berlin Mandate, the industrialised States have shown that they accept greater responsibility and the justified interests of the developing States for a sustained development.

The Third Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) achieved progress in showing that it is the focal point to examine sustainable development at the international, national and local levels (see report on page 163). The CSD's decisions (on page 252) envisage a very significant role in areas such as trade and environment and the need was stressed for rules to enhance positive interaction between both issues. Sustainable production and consumption, the development and transfer of environmentally sound technologies, and environmental law, were other areas singled out.

However, exactly these topics were the ones raised most often during the 18th session of the UNEP Governing Council (see page 185). They were repeated time and again in statements to plenary and during discussion in committees. However, it is still not clear to everybody what the respective roles of UNEP and CSD are meant to be. Only those clearly involved understand the differences between CSD and UNEP while those not directly involved are uncertain. Both are necessary and it has to be really clear as to who is doing what. They should be seen as complementary pieces of the same mosaic. There are certain things that UNEP can do that CSD cannot and others that should be in the domain of CSD. If you have read the CSD decisions and then seen those of the Governing Council, you will read very similar stuff.

One last comment on UNEP : It was the habit of the former Executive Director, Mostafa Tolba, to summarise the points raised most frequently in the general discussion and to react - sometimes very frankly - to these. This always led to a lively exchange of views and was guaranteed to fill the plenary. Many delegates would have liked Ms. Dowdeswell to do something similar, especially with regard to her own position on particularly new or controversial topics.

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We are concerned with the changed situation regarding environmental policy in the United States, but would prefer not to comment on this ourselves. Instead, we have asked US friends to report on these changes for us in the next issue. We already have the cartoons !

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This is a special double issue as there are so many things to report. Our thanks to our publisher, who has enabled our readers to be informed much quicker than if we had been required to split this issue.

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- Wolfgang R. Brey -