EDITORIAL

It was never altogether clear what purpose the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, negotiated within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, was meant to serve. At its launch it was hailed as the blueprint for global economic governance; but we reported in EPL 28 at page 129 on the conflicting positions in the MAI argument and the widespread public opposition and parliamentary concerns with the treaty's conflicts with environmental, social and cultural regulations and its impact on developing countries. These countries – even if involved – were never full participants.

Now three years of discussions have failed to produce a consensus. On the contrary, positions have become so hardened that the whole topic would appear to have been thrown out as not possible in its present form.

One can only agree with a Financial Times commentary, which noted that there is at least one lesson to be learnt for international negotiations from the MAI fiasco: this is not the way to do it. Indeed, after the negotiations on the Aarhus Convention and signing, it should be clear to everyone that success in such negotiations can only be achieved when all concerned circles are fully and constantly involved in the process.

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When we finished this editorial we had not yet received the results from Buenos Aires, either from the Climate Change Conference or the UNEP High-Level Meeting of Ministers and Officials. However, on page 277 you will find a short note of the main points before the UNEP meeting.

The most interesting on-going discussion is still the reform – the so-called co-ordination or cooperation – between the secretariats for the 'environment' conventions and in a larger sense, the activities of other partners in the UN family concerning the environment and sustainable development. (Also one of the points before the High-Level Meeting of Ministers in Buenos Aires.) In this respect, the Second Committee of the UN General Assembly recently held a panel discussion on "How to achieve a better coherence and improved co-ordination among environmental and environment-related conventions." One of the members of the panel, Michael Zammit Cutajar, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, said that the conventions would benefit from a strong UNEP and, stressing the importance of scientific assessment, proposed that UNEP assess the scientific relationships between the various conventions.

We apologise for the late report on the Elizabeth Haub Prize, due to difficulties in obtaining the laudatio from the Free University of Brussels. The laureate has promised to send us the paper he presented in an updated form for inclusion in the next issue.

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As always at this time of year, we look back to what we have achieved within ICEL, and particularly with this journal, and what we are keen to accomplish in the future. This, of course, also depends on discussions with our partners; but we look forward to the challenges before us in the coming months.

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