

## High-Level Talks

Representatives of the Commission and the Government of Japan have met for high-level consultations on the environment in the context of a dialogue established in 1997 on the basis of an exchange of letters.

This eighth session allowed the two parties not only to review bilateral cooperation but also to assess key

issues at the heart of international negotiations, notably the environment and trade, forests, biosafety and climate change.

Discussions on trade and the environment focused on preparations for the Seattle Ministerial session of the World Trade Organisation in November and the conclusions of the G-8 Summit. ➡

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Both parties observed that better integration of environmental criteria across the range of topics in the field of international trade would be essential if progress towards sustainable development is to be maintained. The Europeans and Japanese also agreed that particular attention should be given to the unresolved issues of precedence between trade-related articles in Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and the provisions of the WTO. It was decided to encourage experts to develop bilateral contacts on this issue in anticipation of the Seattle session.

On forests, the two parties recognised the need, following the fourth meeting of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, for a more rational global approach on forestry issues, and the importance of promoting sustainable forest practices worldwide.

Regarding the biosafety protocol, the Japanese were thanked for their support for the EU position at the Cartagena meeting in February (see Environmental Policy and Law, Vol. 29 at pages 84 and 138). The two delegations agreed to continue working "in the same direction" to press for a final agreement at the earliest opportunity.

Concerning chemicals, the two parties considered emissions of dioxins and endocrine disruptors, agreeing to collaborate more closely on these issues and to develop a regular dialogue with a view to sharing research results.

On climate change, Europe and Japan reaffirmed their commitment to achieving the targets set in Kyoto concerning the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Both sides recognised similar key problem areas in the process, i.e., the participation of developing countries, the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol (notably

by the United States), and the implementation of domestic policies and measures that will result in the achievement of the respective targets within the specified period.

Regarding proposals to introduce a ceiling on the use of flexible mechanisms, the Commission indicated that such a proposal must be considered and negotiated by all parties. However, the EU delegation also argued that without some such ceiling, the achievement of real global emission reductions would be in jeopardy.

The two parties agreed to maintain regular contact in the run-up to the Bonn Ministerial session (COP5) at the end of the year. Japan, which will chair G-8 meetings during the year 2000, stressed its wish to ensure that the G-8 Environment Session from 7–9 April 2000, makes a constructive contribution to the general debate on climate change.

The two delegations stressed their determination to pursue work within the UN Commission on Sustainable Development with a view to implementing Agenda 21. Similarly, in respect of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the two parties agreed to maintain and develop bilateral contacts and to support action by UN bodies to achieve Rio + 10 targets by 2002.

Contacts are to be initiated between the European Environment Agency and the Environment Agency of Japan in order to develop a mutually beneficial relationship based on exchanges of information and data. To this end, it was decided that contact points should be established.

The discussions were co-chaired by James Currie, Director General of DGXI (Environment) and Ambassador Koike, responsible for global economic and environmental affairs. □