

## REFERENCES TO OTHER TOPICS

### Ecosystem Decline

A report entitled "World Resources 2000-2001: People and Ecosystems, The Fraying Web of Life", has been released by the United Nations Development Programme, the UN Environment Programme, the World Bank and the World Resources Institute, which calls for a fresh approach to halt the widespread decline in the world's ecosystems.

The Report identifies human population growth and increasing consumption as the two primary factors causing such a decline. It urges an ecosystems approach to managing the world's critical resources, which means evaluating decisions on land and resource use in terms of their impact on ecosystems' capacity to produce goods and services.

The Study also recommends tackling the information gap; engaging in a public dialogue on goals, policies and trade-offs; recognising the value of ecosystem services; and involving local communities in ecosystem management.

### WHO: Indoor Air Pollution

According to the World Health Organisation, up to one billion people, mostly women and children, are regularly exposed to indoor air pollution at levels that exceed guidelines by up to 100 times. The Organisation has called for greater attention to be given to high air pollution in the indoor environment, particularly in developing countries, where cooking and heating with solid fuels such as wood, coal and charcoal is prevalent. In India alone, an estimated half-a-million children die annually from illnesses related to indoor air pollution.

The WHO has proposed the establishment of a health effects database on air pollution to help identify hotspots of health-threatening air pollution levels and populations at high risk.

### Pacific Forum

The 31<sup>st</sup> South Pacific Forum will take place in Tarawa, Kiribati on 27 October. Heads of government from Australia, New Zealand and fourteen self-governing Pacific islands meet for three days to discuss security, living standards, sustainable development, natural disasters and trade issues.

A dialogue will follow the Forum with partners such as Canada, the European Union, China, Japan and the United States.

### OECD: Risk Assessment and Chemicals

To promote better understanding of risk assessment related to chemical accidents, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has sponsored the International Chemical Accident Risk Assessment Thesaurus (CARAT™). Many differences in methodologies and use of terms exist across and even within countries, which leads to confusion and difficulties in sharing experience in this field. This new computer-based system will help to overcome this problem and facilitate better communication.

Now available to the public via the Internet, CARAT™ provides a means to compare risk assessment approaches related to chemical facilities, as applied in various countries. It does this by looking at the four elements which describe risk assessment: hazard identification, release/exposure scenario, hazard/subject reaction and likelihood. It is searchable and includes laws, regulations, definitions and policies related to risk assessment in the context of chemical accident prevention, preparedness and response.

Authorised individuals enter data into the system – usually an expert in a particular law, regulation or case study. Currently, CARAT™ contains 32 entries from five OECD-member countries and the European Commission. Over time, the system is expected to grow as other countries, international organisations and industrial organisations add information.

CARAT™ was developed by a multi-country group led by the United States with technical support from the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania under a cooperative agreement with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Netherlands manages the system.

CARAT™ is found at: <http://www.oecd.org/ehs/carat/>. Inquir-

ies about the system can be sent to the application manager at: [carat.oecd@rivm.nl](mailto:carat.oecd@rivm.nl).

### UK: Carbon Trust

A new trust, to be known as the "Carbon Trust" and which is to become operational in April 2001, will start distributing about £140 million worth of incentives to companies to encourage the adoption of energy efficient technologies.

The Department of Transport, Environment and the Regions said the Carbon Trust would be set up at the same time as the country's Climate Change Levy. It will be business-led and run as a limited company.

In addition to handing out grants, the trust will serve as the focus to help ensure that business adapts to the UK's obligations under the Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

From the £140 million pounds sterling, £27 million will go to accelerate adoption of energy efficient technologies, particularly for small and medium-sized businesses.

### ITLOS: Occupancy Agreement

On 18 October, the Agreement on the Occupancy and Use of the Premises of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea was signed by the President of the Tribunal, the Minister for Justice of the Federal Republic of Germany, and the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, in Berlin.

The Agreement establishes the essential legal framework for the move to and future occupancy of the new Headquarters Building. The move will take place in the middle of November, and the address of the Tribunal will then be: Am internationalen Seegerichtshof 1, 22609 Hamburg, Germany.



President of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Judge P. Chandrasekhara Rao, receives the key of the Headquarters Building

Courtesy: Stephan Wallocha

### Trade and the Environment

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) will meet in Geneva on 23 October to discuss the relationship between trade rules and international environmental agreements. UNEP says that the debate has up until now focused too much on the potential for conflict and not enough on practical ways of resolving tensions and promoting common goals.

A two-day meeting of the World Trade Organisation's Trade and Environment Committee will follow the Meeting.

