

REFERENCES TO OTHER TOPICS

Secretary-General Seeks Second Term

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan has said he will make himself available to serve a second five-year term. He made the announcement during a press conference held on 22 March. The news has received an enthusiastic response from the US, Nordic states and many African countries. Kofi Annan's first term is due to conclude at the end of this year.

Third Global Forum on Governance

The Third Global Forum on Governance: Fostering Democracy and Development, was held from 15-17 March in Naples, Italy. It focused on the theme of information and communications technology (ICT) applications by governments as an instrument of democracy and development. It was attended by over 900 participants from 122 countries, representing governments, academia, business and civil society.

Representatives discussed how governments can harness information technologies, and the Internet in particular, as instruments of civil, economic, and social progress. Discussions focused on governance issues in the Internet era. For example, the impact of ICT on the organisation of government, the implementation of e-government, services to citizens, services to business and the digital divide and international co-operation.

The impact of ICT in transforming the way governments function was recognised by all present. The benefits for developed countries and for encouraging the development process were highlighted.

The Forum produced a number of recommendations for action, including the following: Sharing best practices and supporting mutual learning on e-government issues; building e-government action plans in partnership with the private sector, consum-

ers and non-profit organisations; and fostering indigenous knowledge, local languages and preservation of local cultures through ICT. (See: <http://www.globalforum.it/htm/frame/inglese/frsetinglese.htm>.)

Trade and Environment

A Conference on Trade and Environment – Bridging Gaps and Moving Forward, was held on 8-9 March 2001, in Geneva. It was organised by the Global Environment and Trade Study (GETS) and World Trade Institute (WTI), and was attended by representatives of government ministries, the United Nations, World Trade Organisation (WTO), international and non-governmental organisations, business and academia.

The aim of the meeting was to consider the linkages between trade and environment, including how these can be reflected better in negotiations of the WTO.

Representatives convened in five panel sessions to discuss subsidies, services and agriculture; capacity building and developing country participation; trade and health; trade-related environmental measures; and civil society and the World Trade Organisation.

(Details from <http://www.gets.org/Geneva/Summary.doc>.)

Halon Trading

UNEP has launched a web portal designed for business-to-business trading of halons. The aim is to facilitate the recycling of halons, therefore reducing the need for new production. The trading service is free of charge and supports the implementation of the Montreal Protocol, under which developed countries phased out halons in 1994 and developing countries have until 2002 to freeze the use of halons. ➤

Energy: Least Developed Countries

A High-Level Meeting on Energy in preparation for the *Round Table on Energy at the Third UN Conference on Least Developed Countries (LDCs)* met from 14-16 March 2001, in Vienna, Austria.

The Meeting was organised by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) in co-operation with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). It served as preparation for the Round Table on Energy scheduled for May 2001 and provided an opportunity to examine energy for sustainable development in LDCs.

Participants produced text summarising proposed key outputs to be carried forward to the Round Table at the Third Conference on LDCs. These proposals include support for large-scale initiatives in selected LDCs for an integrated rural development programme, promotion of the role of private energy service companies, and organisation of an event on the development of strategies to protect against oil price fluctuations. For the *Sustainable Developments* report outlining these discussions in detail, see <http://www.iisd.ca/sd/unido/>.

UN: Financing for Development

The concluding resolution of the second Financing for Development Preparatory Committee recommended on 23 February that the *International Conference on Financing for Development* will be held in Mexico in 2002 at the highest political level, including a summit.

To facilitate its deliberations, the Preparatory Committee set a programme of work that mirrored the six themes identified in the Secretary-General's report on development financing: mobilising domestic financial resources; mobilising international resources, including foreign direct investment; enhancing trade; increasing international co-operation; confronting external debt challenges; and addressing systemic issues – including financial architecture reform.

The PrepCom focused most of its attention on reviewing the inputs, at all levels, to the substantive preparatory process, the final conference and its outcome. The Preparatory Committee's goal was to lay the groundwork for the historic conference by undertaking a thorough assessment of how the world's financial development needs could be met.

IPCC: Meeting on Third Assessment Report

The Third Working Group of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) met from 28 February – 3 March 2001 in Accra, Ghana. The goal was to finalise and adopt its part of the IPCC's Third Assessment Report. The Report, *Climate Change 2001: Mitigation*, as well as the summary for policymakers, was approved by the delegates from 85 countries.

The Report is the culmination of more than two years of work by almost 400 authors and contributors and assesses options for cutting greenhouse gas emissions. It confirms that many cost-



IPCC in session

Courtesy: IPCC

effective solutions exist to limit greenhouse gas emissions; though there are often institutional, behavioural and other barriers to their implementation.

More information is available from the IPCC Working Group III Technical Support Unit in Bilthoven, The Netherlands. Tel: +41 22 9178-242.

Synergies and Coordination among MEAs

The Informal Regional Consultation on Inter-Linkages: Synergies and Coordination Among Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) took place from 26-27 February 2001 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The Consultation was organised by the United Nations University (UNU) in collaboration with the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment of the Government of Malaysia, the Ministry of the Environment of Japan, and the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) of Malaysia. It was attended by approximately 130 participants, including representatives of

MEA secretariats, governments, the academic and scientific community, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations. The Consultation builds on an earlier conference held in July 1999 in Tokyo, Japan.

The UNU and its partners are seeking ways to promote a more integrated and comprehensive approach to MEA negotiation and implementation, moving from overarching principles for developing synergies, to on-the-ground activities and case studies.

The goal of the meeting was to examine the impacts of environmental degradation at both the national and regional level, and to aid in the formulation of holistic approaches to environmental governance, particularly through identification of lessons based on existing experience and the development of "tool-kits" for future work.

The output of the Consultation included a series of recommendations and proposed case studies based on discussions held in plenary sessions and four working groups.

Bycatch Limits

ASCOBANS*, the Agreement on Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas, will be pressing the European Commission to restrict the level of marine mammals dying after entanglement in nets to less than 1.7 per cent of their populations as a first step towards improving their conservation.

It is hoped that these "bycatch limits" will form part of a review of the European Union's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The EU published a draft Green Paper on Common Fisheries Policy reform in March 2001. Comments to the Commission should be made by 30 September, 2001. Finalisation of the reforms is scheduled for December 2002, with the new policy in place in January 2003. A range of proposals, some of which are specific to individual fisheries, are being recommended to reduce the threat of bycatch. These include more widespread use of pingers (small devices which, when attached to nets, emit sounds that are designed to warn marine mammals of imminent danger), and studies into alternative fishing methods including longlining. Requests are also being made to governments for more information on net sizes and the amount of time nets are deployed in key areas.

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* Members are Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and the UK.

The Agreement was concluded in 1991 under the auspices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, which is known as the UNEP/CMS or Bonn Convention. The 8th Advisory Committee Meeting of ASCOBANS was held in Nymindegab, Denmark, between 2-5 April 2001.

Haze Negotiations

Government negotiators from South East Asian countries are closer to a transboundary haze pollution agreement, following a three-day meeting, which finished on 22 March 2001 in Kuala Lumpur.

A spokesman for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) said, "the Meeting made good progress in reviewing the draft agreement and identifying the key issues. The general contours of the agreement have become clearer."

An outline for the agreement was prepared by UNEP in collaboration with the ASEAN Secretariat. It is expected to deal with the complex policy and technical issues of monitoring, prevention and mitigation of transboundary haze pollution and build on other arrangements developed under the ASEAN framework.

Since the devastating forest fires of 1997-98, UNEP has co-ordinated interagency assistance to ASEAN countries, including initiatives to build fire fighting response capacity, establish early warning systems and develop legal arrangements.

Total economic losses caused by the forest fires – which started in oil palm plantations and agricultural and forestry holdings, mainly on the Indonesian islands of Sumatra and Kalimantan – have been estimated at around US\$9.3 billion. About 10 million hectares of Indonesia's national forests, one of the world's centres of biodiversity, were destroyed. More than 20 million people were exposed to extremely high levels of pollutants known to cause both acute and long-term health effects.

Three more meetings of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for an Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution are scheduled for this year.

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