

EDITORIAL

The preparations for Johannesburg are speeding up. The first sub-regionals, followed by regional meetings, have already taken place and we report on the outcome of the European Ministerial Meeting on page 295. The others will be covered in the next issue.

The UN Secretary-General has asked Jan Pronk, the Dutch Environment Minister, to serve as his special envoy and "to work with political leaders at the highest level to assess their views on the goals of the WSSD." Kofi Annan has also asked Nitin Desai, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, to act as Secretary-General of the Johannesburg Summit, and he also intends to establish a high-level Advisory Panel of distinguished experts to discuss new approaches for reaching the goals of sustainable development.

Of special importance in view of the preparations for Johannesburg are the discussions on governance (see page 266); that is, where in the future environment and sustainable development will be placed within the UN system, which in turn is fundamental to the whole debate on predictable, stable and adequate funding.

According to a UN report, the aftermath of 11 September will affect the world economy and the global financial markets. We can only hope that these developments will not have a negative impact on the results of Johannesburg.

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In addition to the Regional Preparatory Meetings for the WSSD, this month will also see the resumption of the third substantive session of the PrepCom for the Conference on Financing for Development. The links between the processes leading up to the Financing for Development Summit in Monterrey, Mexico, in March 2002, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development six months later, are becoming increasingly obvious. Some observers feel that if Monterrey is seen to be a "failure," then the prospects for a positive outcome from Johannesburg are poor.

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We are surprised that we have already reached the last issue for this year. Surprised, because in our field we have no natural breaks in our work, but rather an ongoing, continuous cycle.

This cycle will begin again in January, with reports on the fifty-sixth session of the UN General Assembly, the International Conference on Freshwater, the Montreal Protocol MOP-13 Meeting, and INC-8 for the Rotterdam (PIC) Convention.

15 October 2001

- Wolfgang R. Steyer -