

EDITORIAL

No matter what the subject, every meeting that one attends today has the same question: Will there or won't there be war?

We are all just hoping that there will be no further negative developments and that the present problems will be solved.

Two of the subject areas on the agenda of the recent Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) – plus a late intervention from Iran on the burning of reed-beds in Iraq just across the border from Iran, with the resulting transboundary effects (see page 61) – were directly related to this: A report on the post-conflict assessment of the environment in Afghanistan, and the report on the environmental situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (see page 67). All three problems are quite different in character but are equally shocking.

The Governing Council was quite productive, which can be seen not only from reading the report (page 58) but also from an overview of the decisions taken (page 94). Although we could only reprint those decisions we felt to be most important for our readers, all others are available from www.unep.org.

For some time, we have had the impression that UNEP is growing in importance and we can certainly say that what was not achieved at this GC was substantially less than what was accomplished. However, a lot still has to be done, especially with regard to the financial aspects – for example, budget support.

In the next issue, we will report mainly on what the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) is undertaking to realise the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and such other recently agreed goals, as contained in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg. Nitin Desai, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, wants to see the upcoming meeting as a “planning session for their implementation.” We expect that CSD will also adopt a decision on a revised style of performance, if the United States delegation proves to be more cooperative than it was at times during the Governing Council.

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Undoubtedly the most pleasurable event so far this year has been the inauguration of the Parvez Hassan Environmental Law Centre in Lahore (see page 80).

The world would surely be a different place if we had more such people.

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- Wolfgang R. Steyer -