

EDITORIAL

We read with interest the result of a study commissioned by the Pentagon, stating that climate change is one of the biggest dangers facing future generations. We all await now the reaction from the White House, which we hope has not been affected in too many ways by the reported (and long time concealed) high levels of lead in the drinking water.

But there are also tensions between Margot Wallström, the EU Environment Commissioner, and her colleague the Commissioner for Transport and Energy, who appear to have different conceptions regarding the importance of the Kyoto Protocol. The latter has openly challenged the EU's commitment to Kyoto, arguing that plans to implement cuts in the greenhouse gas emissions pose a severe threat to European industry. While stating that she supported the Kyoto target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the EU by 8 per cent between 2008 and 2012, Loyola de Palacio added that the Union should explore alternative ways of meeting that goal.

Margot Wallström has complained repeatedly that the Transport Commissioner is undermining her efforts to get countries such as Russia to ratify the Protocol and has labelled her "disloyal". However, this quarrel will be no surprise to some people, given the resistance from certain quarters within the EU to the Transport Protocol of the Alpine Convention.

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There have been several discussions – mainly at national level in connection with the constitutions – about the relationship between environment and human rights.

As far back as 1968, a proposal in this direction was made by an IUCN representative at the UNESCO Conference on the Biosphere, after which a study was prepared by Prof. Steiner of Giessen University (BzU Vol. 32 (in German) ISBN 3 503 01153, available from the ICEL secretariat).

The first discussion on an international level was held from 23–25 June 1975 (BzU Vol. 41, ISBN 3 503 01427 6 (trilingual)). After that, nothing happened for a long time, so there was some surprise in 2001, when international discussions began within the Human Rights Commission and produced first resolutions.

We are very happy that Prof. Dinah Shelton, an expert on Human Rights law, agreed to report on the latest developments within the broader concept of sustainable development (see page 66).

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The next issue is planned after the meeting of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum of the United Nations Environment Programme and the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD).

- Wolfgang Breyer -

15 March 2004