

EDITORIAL

At the UN level a lot has been happening with regard to the “fundamental reform” or “radical overhaul” of the UN’s management structure and practices, despite the fact that the Secretary-General’s term of office is coming to an end. We expect that this could affect many aspects of our work.

During the past months, Kofi Annan has appointed Mark Malloch Brown, the former UNDP Administrator, as Deputy Secretary-General. He has replaced Louise Fréchette, who has returned to Canada.

It is significant that the smaller countries are trying to limit the power of the veto States, while the permanent members of the Security Council are fighting to maintain it. The relevant “veto” resolution proposes that, in future, grounds for a veto must be in written form and could, in the case of genocide, crimes against humanity and grave violations of human rights, be denied.

There are also calls within the UN for the outsourcing or relocation of several of its non-core headquarters functions out of New York, which have similarly met with opposition.

The Secretary-General submitted his proposals for the new Executive Director of UNEP very quickly to the General Assembly, who gave him their support, although the speaker of the G-77 Group objected that there had been no prior consultation process; however, the Group’s agreement showed that Achim Steiner, as former Director-General of IUCN, had gained international recognition for his work. Still open is the decision as to the new Executive Secretary of the Climate Change Convention and later, more importantly, who will be appointed UN Secretary-General. There are more than enough candidates juggling out there for both positions.

In the next issue we will report on the new “High-Level Panel on UN System-Wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment” appointed by Kofi Annan, which has raised high expectations.

Details of the Zayed International Prize for the Environment are given in the UNEP-GC article on page 58. The UNEP-GC/GMEF was planned in Dubai under the patronage of Sheikh Maktoum Bin Raschid Al Maktoum, who sadly died shortly before the meeting. The cancellation of the venue had already been decided upon, when the new Emir, Mohammed Bin Raschid, kindly renewed the invitation. All statements and speeches at the meeting consequently reflected the passing of Sheikh Maktoum with condolences to the people of Dubai.

We should add that UNEP has named seven “green” leaders who are to be celebrated as the 2006 Champions of the Earth. Three of them are well known to all in our field: Tommy Koh (Singapore), Mohamed El-Ashry (Egypt) and Ms Massoumeh Ebtekar (Iran), her country’s first female vice-president and a champion of cleaner production in the petrochemical industry.

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- Wolfgang R. Steury -