

EDITORIAL

As this issue goes to print, we note increased attention in the area of climate change. The UN Secretary General asks developed countries to provide aid to assist developing countries to “curb” climate change; the EU and G-8, both chaired by the German Chancellor, has made it an issue of their agendas. Even the US, which has hampered international negotiations on this issue, is beginning work domestically (page 353) at federal and state levels. The G-8 Summit will test the resiliency of its Chair to attain a durable international commitment that includes the US.

Meanwhile, however, the UNFCCC cautions about misunderstanding of the various “climate offset” mechanisms. The President of Uganda has called climate change “an act of aggression by the rich against the poor”.

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Proposals to convert UNEP from its current designation as a UN programme (described in the negotiations as a ‘catalyst’ for relevant action) to a UN ‘agency’ or ‘organisation’ continue to be expressed, but developing countries increasingly recognise that the name is not the most important factor. Rather, the focus is on the improvement of UNEP’s competency and financial situation. This increased capacity should be the subject of specific commitments before any other change is agreed.

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ECOSOC is also in focus – its newly elected president speaks of “rejuvenating” that body, while the new UN Secretary General’s remarks focused on “five critical ways” for it to advance its agenda. This comes in conjunction with the UN Task Force report on ways to advance the UN’s delivery in social, economic and environmental areas (page 274). Recognising ECOSOC’s mission and contribution in the past, we look forward to its continuing improvement.

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The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) has concluded the negotiations of its Headquarters Agreement with the German government, at a meeting between Judge Rüdiger Wolfrum, President of ITLOS, and Georg Witschel, Director of Legal Affairs of the German Foreign Office.

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The UN changeover has resulted in several key personnel changes, beginning at the top, where the new Secretary General has reshuffled his Cabinet. Current legal advisor, Swiss professor Nicolas Michel, however, will continue in that position. Some key changes include Vaclav Mikulka (former director of the Codification Division), succeeding Vladimir Golitsyn as the new Director of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea. Mahnoush Arsanjani (Iran) has stepped up to be the new Head of Codification; and Annebeth Rosenboom is the new Head of the Treaty Section.

In the realm of agreements, Shakeel Bhatti, formerly Head of the Genetic Resources Section at WIPO, has been named to replace José Esquinas as Secretary of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

We wish them all success in their challenging new positions.

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- Wolfgang Rosenboom -