

EDITORIAL

As expressed in the previous Editorial, we expected more immediately implementable results from the 67th session of the United Nations General Assembly (GA) following the outcome of Rio+20. However, the old saying can be applied here, "If you don't know what to do, create a committee". UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has done just this through the establishment of the Open Working Group tasked with developing sustainable development goals. Now we have to hope that the 68th session will have all the groundwork in place to take action.

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It is shocking to read Secretary-General Ban's statement that in the next 20 years we will need at least 50 percent more food, 45 percent more energy and 30 percent more fresh water. We would be interested to know how this is calculated and to hear Ban's thoughts on how to meet these pressing demands.

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Sometimes there is hope. We heard from the University of Southern California that it is not only possible to safely dispose of emissions of the greenhouse gas Fluoroform (an extremely damaging industrial by-product), but also to utilise them in the production of medicines and agricultural chemicals.

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Many businesses now promote their operations using the term "sustainability". It is sometimes difficult to confirm whether advances are being made or the term is used only in an effort to influence public perception. Research is needed to determine how business efforts match up with internationally accepted principles of sustainable development.

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Royal Dutch Shell received the 2012 Public Eye People's Award for "Worst Company of the Year", citing the company's oil exploration in the Arctic. The recent grounding of Shell's Kullusk drillship near Alaska's Kodiak Island leaves many observers concerned about the 2013 drilling season.

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We are always unhappy when good policy-makers leave their posts. A recent instance is the resignation of Lisa Jackson, Administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency. It is unfortunate to hear rumours that continuous attacks on her and the EPA and a lack of administration support for major Clean Air Act regulations may have had some bearing on her decision.

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While some are content with the outcome of the Doha Climate Summit (reported in this issue at pp. 18-21), others say it was yet another debacle. We would formulate it differently: This was not a collective failure of the UN but rather a victory for national economic egoism. The majority of participants were not consensus-oriented.

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We cannot close without offering congratulations to our friends Hans Lammers and Steve McCaffrey on their election to the Implementation Committee of the UNECE Water Convention. We commend the Parties on their excellent choices.

- Wolfgang B. Sauer -

29 January 2013