

EDITORIAL

It is gradually becoming a tradition that with a double issue we report on the UNEP Governing Council and the resolutions adopted there. This exercise always includes a stocktaking of action on previous resolutions by the governments concerned. For several years past, government representatives in UNEP have agreed on the danger and to take action concerning the problem of "acid rain". Although some moves were initiated no concerted effort was made until recently as the damage was becoming more and more obvious and now there is a danger that it could be too late to stop the consequences. How the situation will be for forests and lakes at the turn-of-the-century, no-one can as yet foresee. This issue reports once again on developments.

Recognizing the US success in reducing carbon dioxide pollution from automobiles, the cabinet of the Federal Republic of Germany has taken a decision to make lead-free petrol compulsory for all new cars registered after 1 January, 1986. It is still questionable if this can be achieved. By taking this initiative, the German Government hopes that some other European countries will follow suit.

With regard to the United States, it is thought that the Clean Air Act could be amended during this Congress, as the major obstacle to action last year — acid rain — will now be addressed. This follows findings of the National Academy of Science.

Still on the subject of UNEP: Readers will see from the report that the funding level has again decreased, so less can be undertaken on the international level. However, this is not an aspect special to UNEP alone, but rather a problem affecting the whole UN system.

For UNEP the general decrease is also a result of the fact that it receives mostly voluntary funding which is, in addition, affected by the rising inflation rate.

On account of this shortage of funds the large donor countries especially are asking for more control in the growth of the UN budgets, and that this control should include an evaluation of the most effective ways and means of applying these funds. Some UN organizations, as is the case with UNEP, are transparent in their workings, but it is expected that there will be a skirmish, if not a battle, in a couple of other organizations.

A very critical point is the annual increase in the FAO budget, where last year the major donor countries did not vote in favour of this growth, but were overruled and outvoted by the majority of Member States, who together contribute only 25 per cent of the budget. Out of a total of 152 Member Countries, 92 of these contribute between 0,01 and 0,05 per cent each of the budget — the 92 together, only 1,40 per cent of the total.

It is to be hoped that these questions and the reactions of the larger donor countries will not prevent increasingly more legislators to block funding until all unsolved aspects have been cleared. The activities of those UN organizations who operate with the support of such countries, with a jointly agreed programme and with open income and expenditure books would be greatly hampered.

An important development is the proposal of the EC to consolidate existing links and collaboration with UNEP: On 15th June Gaston Thorn, President of the Commission of the European Community, wrote to UNEP's Executive-Director proposing to strengthen and develop cooperation between the two institutions "in order to give a more positive direction to our activities and to help attain even more effectively the objectives of environmental protection". The Commission's cooperation will, inter alia, cover the following: continued participation by the EC in UNEP meetings; exchange of documentation; regular contacts with a view to exchanging information on each other's activities and programmes; consultations on issues of common interest — such as the regional seas programme, environmental evaluation and environment and development. In his reply on 21st June, Mostafa Tolba expressed UNEP's "full agreement" on all the points proposed. □