

EDITORIAL

The 4th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was very important in view of the June 1997 Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly which will review the implementation of the decisions from Rio (see page 138).

It is expected that the next UN General Assembly will have a very knowledgeable President - Ambassador Ismail Razali, Chairman of the 1993 session of CSD (see Environmental Policy and Law, Vol. 23, at page 190). As the right to propose the Chairman of the CSD next year rests with the African States, nobody will be surprised if they propose Mostafa Tolba, the former UNEP Executive-Director. A very good team indeed!

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We remarked in the last Editorial on the positive changes at UNCTAD. Since then, UNCTAD IX has adopted decisions on priorities and reforms which we shall report on in the next issue. Unfortunately, the same positive attitude did not accompany the recent 49th Assembly of the 190 Member States of the World Health Organisation (WHO). General comment: The lack of a will to reform.

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Western governments have been urged to mount a coordinated crackdown on smuggling of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) which is undermining the Montreal Protocol. While a report says that Russia is the main source of illegal exports of these substances to the developed world, it suggests that the black market (estimated at 9,000 - 18,000 tonnes a year), is greatest in the USA.

Internationally, there is no possibility of complete control. But how can this be achieved nationally?

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We hope that a report being prepared by the World Trade Organisation's Committee on Trade and the Environment, to be presented to the Singapore Conference in December, may recommend changing WTO rules to make them more flexible and accommodating to environmental concerns.

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Following European Union approval of the Alpine Convention, we hope that the Swiss Government is trying to re-invigorate the ratification process and thus eliminate the resistance of a number of Cantons against the Convention and its Protocols (see also photo on page 170).

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The European Commission has proposed that all legislation, including environmental laws, be subject to qualified majority voting, rather than unanimity in the Council of Ministers. This is desirable if the control function of the European Parliament will be further improved. Commission officials agree that if the EU is to accommodate enlargement into central and eastern Europe in the coming decade, it is essential that institutional and voting procedures be changed.

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We are sorry that the article on the development of environmental policy in the United States under the "new majority", is still outstanding. The author wants to take into account all new developments, mostly on the negative side. Perhaps a more positive sign is that President Clinton has chosen an environmental lawyer to run his campaign for re-election.

- Wolfgang B. Sney -

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