

# REGIONAL AFFAIRS

## Latin America

### Environment Council Approved

At a meeting of environment ministers from Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia, held in Cartagena, Colombia, in connection with an Andean Pact summit to celebrate 30 years of the accord, it was agreed to form an Advisory Council of Ministers to strengthen cooperative efforts to protect the environment.

The advisory council will formulate joint programmes for environmental protection, promote the exchange of information, and work out a joint position among the pact countries regarding major international environmental issues. One of the most pressing issues for the new council is to establish a common front on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

Ministers agreed to intensify efforts to strengthen regional programmes of environmental management in

order to boost the process of economic and political integration among member countries. One of these programmes, an existing agreement on Non-Returnable Technical Cooperation, financed by the Inter-American Development Bank and directed toward strategies for the protection of biodiversity in the Andes, will be restructured, and ministers will decide on proposed reforms at the next summit of Andean environment ministers, later this year in Bolivia.

It was decided to create a series of national workshops to refine data banks and the computerized exchange of information on ecosystems. Dependent on financing from the Andean Promotion Corporation, the pact's semi-autonomous development bank, the countries hope to consolidate their data banks into a single information system. □