

UNEP/OHCHR

Human Rights and the Environment

An Expert Seminar on Human Rights and the Environment, organised jointly by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), was held from 14–16 January 2002 in Geneva.

This initiative sought to bring together human rights and environment experts to review the implementation of Agenda 21 with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights. It was guided by a group of 25 experts from the human rights, environment and related fields. The aim was to produce a set of key recommendations, to be presented to the 2002 session of the Committee on Human Rights, which could feed into the preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) to be held in September this year.

Discussion focused on the significant progress that has been achieved in bringing together human rights and environmental issues since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), both at international and national levels. This included the adoption of new multilateral texts (such as the Aarhus Convention), new provisions in national constitutions, domestic and regional case law, and trends in review and deci-

sion-making mechanisms in international agencies. The participation of experts from a wide range of disciplines and national backgrounds was crucial to the review.

The Group of Experts held a Preparatory Meeting on 14–15 January to discuss and draft a concise set of recommendations. In this task they were aided by background documentation (including submissions received from gov-

ernments, non-governmental organisations and other international agencies). The recommendations were then presented to a one-day seminar held on 16 January, to which governments and key observers from the other UN agencies and civil society were invited.

During the course of the Meeting, the experts put forward suggestions for future developments, which are included in the final text 'Conclusions of the Expert Meeting' (see www.cedha.org.ar/conclusions.htm). These relate to, *inter alia*, procedural and substantive rights; procedural (participatory) rights at the national and international levels; and institutional arrangements.

(See also 'Environmental Rights in Multilateral Treaties Adopted between 1991 and 2001' on page 70 and Human Rights and the Environment: National Experiences in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh on page 99.) (MJ)



Courtesy: NZZ