

## REFERENCES TO OTHER TOPICS

### Millennium Assessment Office

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment has officially opened its Secretariat in Penang, Malaysia. The Secretariat is headed by Executive Director Walter Reid, who will be responsible for coordinating the work of 1500 scientists and research institutions worldwide.

The Millennium Assessment (MA) aims to improve the management of the world's ecosystems by providing decision-makers and the public with peer-reviewed, policy-relevant scientific information on the state of ecosystems, the consequences of change and options for response, through "multi-scale assessments" at global, sub-regional and national levels.

The four-year assessment process, which began in April 2001, is recognised by governments as a mechanism to meet part of the assessment needs of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD).

### State of the World

The State of the World 2002 report, published by the Worldwatch Institute at the beginning of January, states that "the world needs a global war on poverty and environmental degradation that is as aggressive and well funded as the war on terrorism."

The 2002 report focuses on issues central to the United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg in September. Although the report highlights a number of social and environmental advances since Rio in 1992, it also emphasises worsening trends on climate change and loss of biological diversity.

(State of the World 2002 – Special World Summit Edition – The Worldwatch Institute – 2002; ISBN: 393-32279-3; see [www.worldwatch.org](http://www.worldwatch.org))

### Transboundary Water Use

A project focusing on the sustainable use of transboundary waters resources and involving the participation of Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Territories, has been signed by the European Commission. The project falls within the context of the SMAP I regional programmes (medium- and short-term priority actions in the environment sector), and is financed through the MEDA initiative.

The project aims to encourage the cooperation of local and municipal non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders in the water sector, in order to promote active participation in the sustainable management of water. The other objectives of the project include improving the situation regarding public water sup-

plies in areas lacking suitable fresh water installations, improving sanitary circuits, and raising awareness at the regional level of experience from local actions.

### Ecotourism

The launch of the International Year of Ecotourism took place on 28 January at UN Headquarters in New York. It was organised by the World Tourism Organisation and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and will seek to provide an opportunity for local and national stakeholders to review the social and environmental benefits that the ecotourism industry can bring.

A series of global and local events, publications and discussion platforms will be organised to allow a review of the ecotourism industry's effect on biodiversity, its potential contribution to sustainable development, its social, economic and environmental impacts, and the degree to which regulatory mechanisms and voluntary programmes are effective in monitoring and controlling those impacts. See [www.uneptie.org/pc/tourism/ecotourism](http://www.uneptie.org/pc/tourism/ecotourism) for more information.

### Global Compact Advisory Council

The first meeting of the GCAC – the first UN advisory body to be composed of both public and private sector leaders – took place on 8 January at UN Headquarters in New York.

The purpose of the meeting was to strengthen UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Global Compact Initiative, which promotes cooperative solutions to the challenges of globalisation, and includes nine principles on human rights, labour rights, and the environment.

The meeting was attended by senior business executives, international labour leaders, and heads of civil society organisations from various parts of the world. Participants focused on questions of Global Compact governance and strategy, including key long-term issues geared towards protecting the integrity of and strengthening the Initiative. In addition, the Advisory Council members discussed further developing the Compact's primary areas of activity and its reach and effectiveness in their respective country, region, and segment of society. (More information can be found at [www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2002/eco22.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2002/eco22.doc.htm).)

### Equator Initiative

An Equator Initiative has been launched to promote practices that help eradicate poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the Equatorial belt. It is headed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in partnership with the Government of Canada, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the United Nations Foundation, and

will focus on capacity building, exchange grants and practical case studies to achieve its aims.

"Equator Initiative Awards", to be presented at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), will recognise five community-based sustainable development success stories involving partnerships between communities and non-governmental and governmental entities. The Initiative will continue beyond the WSSD and additional partner organisations to the Equator Initiative are welcomed (see [www.equatorinitiative.org](http://www.equatorinitiative.org)).

### Transport and Environment

A Declaration pledging to cooperate in tackling environmental problems caused by transportation was adopted on 16 January. The Tokyo ministerial conference on transport was attended by ministers from 14 European countries, as well as Australia, Canada, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and the United States.

The Declaration recognised the contribution of the transport sector to air and marine pollution and climate change, and stated the need for the implementation of applicable international standards.

### ICRC-3 Recommendations

The Third Meeting of the Interim Chemical Review Committee (ICRC-3) met from 17-21 February in Geneva. The Meeting resulted in recommendations that three widely-used pesticides – Monocrotophos, Granos TBC/Spinox T and DNOC – and all forms of asbestos be added to the international list of chemicals subject to the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure.

Monocrotophos is used in many developing countries to control insects and spider mites on cotton, citrus, rice, maize and other crops, but threatens farm workers with medical effects including, in severe cases, serious respiratory problems, convulsions and even death. It is also highly toxic to birds and mammals. Granox TBC and Spinox T are mixtures of fungicides and the highly toxic insecticide Carbofuran, and are used in a powdered form by peanut farmers. DNOC is an insecticide, weed-killer and fungicide that is toxic to humans as well as other organisms.

These recommendations will be transmitted to the next meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee of the Rotterdam Convention on the PIC Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, scheduled to take place from 30 September to 4 October 2002 in Bonn, Germany.

### WTO: Committee on Trade and Development

The 38th Session of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Committee on Trade and Development (CTD) convened on 14 February in Geneva. The Committee addressed the annual note from the Secretariat outlining its intended technical assistance aims for the year, as the primary item of discussion for the session.

The other main item foreseen, the election of Chairs for both the CTD and the Sub-Committee on Least-Developed Countries, had to be postponed, due to lack of consensus on the list of candidates presented at the General Council meeting held the previous day.

### Cost of Millennium Development Goals

According to a recent study by the World Bank, financing the successful implementation of the Millennium Development Goals will cost between US\$40-60 billion per year in additional aid for the next 15 years.

The Goals, which were endorsed by world leaders at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000, set out a series of economic, environmental, educational and health objectives.

James Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, said that "these numbers show that without additional resources we will not meet the development goals. But they also underscore why success lies in a partnership of action between developing countries and rich countries." He has called on rich countries to double their official development assistance from the current level of about \$57 billion per year, and dramatically cut their agricultural subsidies.

The report stressed that while the \$40-60 billion of funding is critical to meeting the Millennium Goals, developing countries would also need to reform their health, education, and institutional policies to improve the effectiveness of development aid.

### Fighting Bio-Piracy

An Alliance called the "Group of Allied Mega-Biodiverse Nations" was launched on 18 February by 12 of the world's most

biologically diverse nations to combat bio-piracy and protect their rights to the genetic resources found on their territories.

The agreement reached in Cancun, Mexico, between Brazil, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Peru, South Africa and Venezuela, reflects a common concern that wealthy nations are "prospecting" for species in order to patent or sell them without offering concessions or benefits to local people. The Alliance criticised the failings of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity to guarantee the equitable use of genetic resources, and pledged to press its case at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in September. The Alliance will seek new trade rules for patenting and registering products made from their plant and animal resources.

### Japan/Norway: "Scientific" Whaling

Japan is to hunt 50 Sei whales this year as part of its scientific research whaling programme. Sei whales are currently listed by IUCN, the World Conservation Union, as endangered. Japan also plans to catch 50 Bryde's whales, 10 sperm whales and increase its catch of minke whales by 50 per cent in the North Pacific under the same research programme.

The next International Whaling Commission meeting is scheduled for May 2002 and Japanese delegates hope for a vote to end a 15-year moratorium on commercial whaling, claiming that growing whale populations are harming fishing. Japanese officials have also started local campaigns to promote whale products and end the ban on commercial whaling.

Norway, which resumed commercial whaling in 1993, has raised its whaling quota to 674 minke whales, from 549 last year. In January 2001 it lifted the ban on whale meat and blubber exports, and has announced that it is ready to export whale products to Japan.

### Asia/Europe (ASEM): Environmental Partnerships

The first Asia-Europe (ASEM) meeting of Environmental Ministers, which comprises the 15 EU Member States and 10 Asian countries, met in Beijing on 17 January 2002. Asian members of ASEM are China, Indonesia, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, The Philippines, South Korea, Malaya, Singapore and Brunei.

The meeting was designed to define the scope and key concerns for developing environmental protection partnerships. Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji said in his opening address that he was "convinced the meeting would help achieve a change for the better in environmental cooperation between Asia and Europe," particularly in the run-up to the World Conference on Sustainable Development, scheduled for September in Johannesburg.

Delegates focused on key environmental problems, ranging from climate change to sustainable development. The Chinese Environment Minister highlighted the increasing problem of desert-advance, which has caused major damage in numerous countries, including China. He regretted that the requisite financial mechanism in the 1994 UN Convention on Desertification "was not fully in place", and noted that this was one of the issues which will be given priority during the WSSD.

The Chinese Deputy Prime Minister lambasted the industrialised countries for the detrimental affect their own development is having on the environment and appealed to them to accept more responsibility for halting such environmental damage.

With regard to climate change, Ministers urged the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol on reducing greenhouse gas emissions so that it can come into effect in 2002 as planned. Speaking for the European Commission, Fernand Thurmes pointed out the extent to which cooperation between the EU and Asian countries had played a key role in concluding the Bonn and Marrakesh agreements. He hoped that such constructive cooperation could continue.

Japan's Environment Minister said his government would undertake the Protocol ratification procedure during the forthcoming parliamentary session at the end of January.

In a final Declaration adopted after the debates, Ministers expressed the hope that the Johannesburg meeting would lead to high-level political commitment for a world sustainable development partnership, as major environmental problems could only be solved by an intense form of international cooperation.

The ASEM partner countries agreed in the Declaration on the need to promote an even-handed debate and closer cooperation in this sphere. They agreed to focus future initiatives on issues bound up with fighting poverty, on energy and the environment, preventing desertification, bio-safety, climate change, and the deterioration of the world's forests.