

EDITORIAL

As many things have happened since March, and it is difficult to judge the outcomes, we are presenting a double issue this time and have closed the deadline prior to the UN/ECE Fifth Ministerial Conference in Kiev.

On the positive side, the decision of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (see page 105) will undoubtedly have the most important long-term effects, although we realise that the adoption of the new procedure for the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (see page 98) is very far-reaching too. Another important milestone will be the signing of four new legally binding instruments during the Kiev meeting.

On the negative side, we have to list

- the statement by the Italian Government that it will not ratify the Traffic Protocol of the Alpine Convention, even though it was largely responsible for prolonging the negotiations for nearly seven years;*
- the lack of sufficient financial support for the Earth Negotiations Bulletin, which is thus unable to cover a number of important international conferences;*
- the plundering in Iraq not only in general, but in particular of the atomic research station El Tuwaiitha – in spite of the fact that the Head of the IAEA, Mohamed El Baradei, had asked the US to secure the installation.*

We are glad that UNEP has started to outline strategies for protecting people and the environment in post-war situations. The choice of Pekka Kaavisto, the dynamic former Finnish Environment Minister, as the “Study Chairman” is a perfect one.

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We will miss Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, the former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, who was engaged in UN Human Rights work and environmental and cultural causes for many years. Through his own Foundation he worked in particular for the Alpine environment. The last time we saw him was at the Bishkek Conference (see Environmental Policy and Law, 32(6), p. 253).

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US Cabinet member Christine Todd Whitman has announced her resignation as environment chief, well in advance of President Bush's re-election campaign. She has said on personal grounds, but the media have cited other reasons. We are unable to judge this. But we hope for a more cooperative US environmental policy in the future.

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The space for the Editorial is now exhausted. You will find more exciting news throughout the following pages!

21 May 2003

- Wolfgang B. Sauer -

P.S: We have just read the statement of the respected US Senator Robert Byrd, criticising the US President for exaggerating the imminent threat in order to obtain support for the Iraq war – both CBS and The New York Times have reported that 49 per cent of those polled now confirm this.