

EDITORIAL

As so much important material has landed on our desks, which we did not want to hold over to a later date, we have decided to make this a double issue.

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Referring to this session's work in the Commission on Sustainable Development (see page 146), UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted that high-level political attention had been diverted from sustainable development "by the recent emphasis given to terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and the war in Iraq." However understandable that might be, he emphasised that, in the struggle to improve human welfare, the international agenda must be balanced with attention to environmental protection, social progress and economic growth, especially as they concern water, sanitation and settlements. He reminded governments that the CSD must act as a watchdog on development issues "alert to threats and fearless in sounding alarms."

During the session, Prof. Jeffrey Sachs, Special Adviser to the UNSG on the Millennium Development Goals, recommended boosting annual flows from the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) to \$20 billion, with flows to the very poorest countries going in the form of grants. He said that "even in the poorest countries there is still time to achieve the MDGs, but the window of opportunity is closing rapidly because of inadequate progress to date."

However, there have been recently many other media reports claiming that the targets are unattainable given the present pace and that, financially speaking, there is no evidence that anything will change.

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The conclusions of a review of the World Bank Group's involvement in the mining and extractive sector, conducted by Emil Salim, a former Indonesian environment minister, are currently being considered. The final recommendations are already the subject of much controversy, especially from the mining companies. Although the industry accepts that the aims are laudable, they claim that these could harm the very countries they seek to help. While the report in principle supports the Bank's continued participation in the sector, it proposes various restrictions that together would limit its involvement in mining and oil projects, irrespective of their characteristics. For example, it recommends supporting projects in a country only after comprehensive governance criteria are met. We shall report on the Bank's response.

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Readers will be interested to hear that at its July meeting, the International Whaling Commission called a halt to a controversial management plan that would not have guaranteed sustainability in whaling. The IWC agreed to make a "revised management plan" the starting point for discussing whale management over the next 12 months, but dropped a proposal to vote on the plan at next year's IWC meeting. More information on the recent session will be included in our next issue.

Wolfgang B. S. -

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