

REFERENCES TO OTHER TOPICS

UN Secretary-General Launches the *Oceans Compact*

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon recently announced a new initiative, the “Oceans Compact”, which will focus on ocean protection, with particular attention to the protection of “people whose livelihoods depend on oceans” and sustainable management, with the goal of attempting to address all ocean issues in an integrated manner, and create a “new momentum



for ocean sustainability”. The SG indicated his intent that the Oceans Compact will “set out a strategic vision for the UN System to deliver more coherently and effectively on its oceans-related mandates, consistent with the Rio+20 outcome”. (UN Press release: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=42668&Cr=ocean&Cr1=>).

ECOSOC’s 2012 Substantive Session

The session adopted nine resolutions and four decisions, ranging from women’s empowerment to human settlements and support for least developed countries. The environment was indirectly addressed in a resolution underscoring the need to implement GA resolution 57/270 B (2003) — which breaks down the roles for Member States, the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders in economic and social fields. Another key action was its adoption by consensus of a resolution on human settlements (E/2012/L.33), encouraging Governments to support the work of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme on the issues related to cities and climate change. Governments were also encouraged to promote sustainability criteria in planning, construction and management for access to clean water and safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, urban and rural services, sustainable waste management, sustainable transport and disaster risk reduction. (<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/ecosoc6545.doc.htm>).

World Heritage Committee: Tough Choices

In its 36th Session, the Committee added 26 sites including China’s Xanadu to the list of World Heritage Sites. In more difficult deliberations, it considered reports on the status of 35 properties currently on the list of World Heritage in Danger, as well as special concerns about two States (Mali and the Democratic Republic of Congo), and also examined regular reporting on the status of other sites. In the end, it retained most of the reviewed Danger List sites on that list — removing one site each from the Philippines and Pakistan, but retaining the US “flagship” Everglades National Park. In addition, the Committee’s review of other sites indicated that it is considering adding Australia’s Great Barrier Reef to the Danger List. The Committee also adopted amendments to the Operational Guidelines. (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/36COM/>).

ICJ: Nicaragua v. Colombia

The ICJ reports that the *Territorial and Maritime Dispute* (Nicaragua v. Colombia) is under deliberation and will be formally decided relatively soon. Documents and press releases at <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?p1=3&p2=1&code=&case=124&k=e2>. Other key environmental cases in various stages of completion include *Aerial Herbicide Spraying* (Ecuador v. Colombia); *Whaling in the Antarctic* (Australia v. Japan); and two cases involving Nicaragua and Costa Rica (*Certain Activities carried out by Nicaragua in the Border Area* (Costa Rica v. Nicaragua) and *Construction of a Road in Costa Rica along the San Juan River* (Nicaragua v. Costa Rica)) <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?p1=3&p2=1>.

FAO: Fisheries Progress

The 30th Meeting of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) discussed a wide-ranging agenda, including the performance to date of one of COFI’s most important outputs, the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF). The most recent evaluation of the CCRF indicates that many States are incorporating elements of the Code into their national law. Specifically, more than 75 percent of FAO Member States report using the CCRF to promote responsible aquaculture practices, but the evaluators noted that the Code alone had provided little impetus to fishing vessels to control harvests. New safety standards for small-scale fishing vessels will soon be published under the CCRF’s mandate. (<http://www.fao.org/fishery/code/en>).

Iron dust in Oceans: Carbon Sink?

A recent study by a team of experts has determined that it may be possible to capture and sink excess atmospheric carbon by sprinkling iron dust on the oceans. The authors admit that there is still a need to evaluate the other environmental impacts such “fertilization” of the ocean surface will have on the waters, biodiversity and floor of the ocean, but note optimism based on the effect that iron dust has been shown to have on the development of heat-trapping diatoms (algae) and their subsequent sinking to 1000-ft. depths. The physical element of the study (dusting an ocean area) was undertaken in Antarctic circumpolar waters. To date, the London Convention forbids larger-scale open testing of this type (<http://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/fertilising-oceans-with-iron-dust-helps-sink-carbon-study/>).

Green Investment Certification

Reuters reports that a new “social responsibility certification” (SRC) system is under development, through which particular bond issues and other investment programmes will be able to obtain certification that they are “Climate Bond Certified” (indicating that they are “linked to low-carbon assets”), in the same way that other SRCs (e.g., FairTrade and Rainforest Alliance) certify products that are produced or harvested in conformance with specified standards of particular aspects of social responsibility. (<http://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/like-coffee-and-cocoa-bonds-to-get-green-certified/>).

EU:

– Deep-water Fish Species

Legislation has been proposed with the goal of protecting deep-water fisheries and related habitats in European waters. Controls being proposed will affect and potentially phase out deep-water trawling and long-line fishing, which the European Commission believes result in about 1 percent of total landings in Europe. (<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/12/586&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>).

– Funding for LIFE+

The European Commission has approved funding of €268.4 million for 202 new projects under the LIFE+ programme. Projects cover actions in the fields of nature conservation, environmental policy, climate change and information and communication on environmental issues. The funding decision is tied to cofunding of approximately €248.1 million. (<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/12/812&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>).

German Chancellor Calls for Climate Agreement

The Guardian newspaper reports that *Bundeskanzlerin* Angela Merkel, warning that global warming will accelerate dramatically in future if it is not addressed now, has called on States to come to agreement on greenhouse gas (GHG) emission limitations as soon as possible. (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2012/jul/17/global-warming-accelerate-deal-merkel>).

Investigation into Penguin Kills

The state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil is opening an investigation into the cause of death of the nearly 500 badly decomposed Magellanic penguins which have washed up onto its shores in recent weeks. The Magellanic penguin has been listed as “Near Threatened” in the IUCN Red List (<http://news.mongabay.com/2012/0717-hance-magellanic-penguins.html>). (TRY)