

EDITORIAL

The 68th General Assembly of the United Nations (UNGA-68) wrapped up its work on 27 December, 2013. For those in attendance, it was a pleasant surprise to see the newly renovated Secretariat Building. We look forward to the opening of the Assembly Hall, which has yet to be finished (see cover photo).

Our leading report in this issue describes several of UNGA-68's resolutions, but does not cover everything of interest, nor give full details. It is hoped that it will serve as a first source for further investigation. The full text of all resolutions will eventually be available online at <http://www.un.org/en/ga/68/resolutions.shtml>.

A US\$ 5.5 billion budget was approved to carry out the work of the organisation over the next two years. Although UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon admitted that this biennium's budget is lower than the last, he said, "We will continue to adapt and equip the United Nations to better implement its mandates".

The declaration entitled "The Rule of Law at National and International Levels" was adopted by consensus. This is a positive sign. We will see how Patricia O'Brien, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and UN Legal Counsel, will push for its realisation.

It remains true, however, that much of the implementation of UN objectives depends on the activities of Member States. For example, the results from the Warsaw Climate Conference are not very promising, especially from the viewpoint of the representatives of NGOs and civil society movements as they departed from the conference. For this reason, Secretary General Ban appointed Jens Stoltenberg, former Norwegian Prime Minister, and John Kufour, former President of Ghana, as special envoys to shepherd political will towards next year's meeting. It will be interesting to see how these two luminaries work together to raise the level of ambition and set the stage for a new and universal legal agreement on this highly charged issue.

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Also connected to climate change, the results from the latest negotiations between the European Commission and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) concerning the regulation of CO₂ emissions from transnational flights have had only a meagre result. An article in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung opined that the "EU is saying goodbye to a global climate policy".

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The Chinese government recently crushed six tons of ivory. This move was enthusiastically welcomed around the world by several organisations, including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Nonetheless, the undersigned finds it unacceptable to destroy a natural resource of such high value. Destroying ivory only drives up the price, reinforcing motivations for poaching. It would be preferable that the products be traded in a regulated market with the proceeds used to support the enforcement of existing and establishment of new laws as necessary.

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The UN reports that 1.3 billion tons of food are wasted each year, causing an economic loss of US\$ 750 billion. This contributes significantly to water waste, but it is even more significant how many people could be fed if we would all be more careful.

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We must apologise to our readers that this issue arrives so late. The Third International Symposium of Laureates of the Elizabeth Haub Prizes for Environmental Law and Diplomacy required special attention at the end of 2013. Your compensation for your patience will be a special issue in 2014 featuring papers and discussions presented during the Symposium from some of the world's most eminent lawyers and diplomats in the field.

31 December 2013

- Wolfgang Breyer -