

# EDITORIAL

*The most interesting resolution from our readers' standpoint to come out of the recent session of the UNEP Governing Council, is that concerning a senior High-level Meeting on Environmental Law, accompanied by an annex of a proposed sequence of events (see page 103). When one considers this against the background of the Executive Director's remarks concerning the difficulties he sees in attempting to fulfil this recommendation, it proves how necessary it was that such a resolution was passed in order that this area should be promoted in UNEP in the future.*

*A question of great importance for the link between UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi and other parts of the world is communication. The Government of Kenya promised its full assistance to facilitate UNEP's work, and the States running the "Symphonie" satellite — France, the Federal Republic of Germany and Switzerland (the last with regard to the European office) — have offered this communication tool. The implementation has now been unresolved since 1978. The necessary certificate of non-objection still has not been delivered by Kenya. Although the question was discussed by the 8 GC and the Kenyan Government was pressed to give an answer before the end of the session (some of the satellite material has had even to be stored at the airport), the government made no reply. At the time of going to press nothing positive has been heard.*

*UNEP has decided to discontinue their publication programme with Pergamon Press, and to review the whole publications policy and planning. This is important, as criticism was loud over the fact that "Mazingira" (see page 66), which has only a limited number of subscribers, has a very large funding.*

*Since the mandate of the Executive-Director expires this Autumn and the United Nations Secretary-General will propose Mostafa Tolba to the General Assembly for reappointment, we feel obliged to inform our readers of the recent reports in the international press claiming that pressure is being exerted by Arab States at the United Nations not to award a £42 m contract for the new UNEP headquarters complex to an Israeli firm, although its tender is the lowest.*

*The government of Kenya expressed concern over the issue after the Afro-Arab group in New York had protested against proposals to award the tender. Kenya, which in effect supports the protest (as do the East European countries), called for the contract to be awarded to the next lowest tenderer, a Kenyan company.*

*The row is embarrassing for the United Nations as Israel is a member and the United States is protesting*

*against the move to upset normal tendering procedure. Mostafa Tolba has recommended to the UN that the project be reviewed, deleting the conference facilities incorporated in it and that new tenders be invited next year. But costs are rising, making this an expensive compromise.*

*The first half of the ninth session of the Law of the Sea Conference made substantial progress in reducing the number of outstanding issues facing the conference (see page 69). Although the amendment of a provision long sought by the environmental community for the protection of marine mammals, especially whales, will be incorporated into the revised text, there was disappointment at the meagre environmental gains made at the conference. This has increased the conviction that some sort of initiative must be taken before the session is completed in Geneva in August, when after six years of work it is distinctly possible that a formal draft treaty could be concluded.*

*In Vol. 5 No. 1, we printed the (then unreleased) text of the draft Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources. The Convention was recently signed at the Southern Oceans Conference which met in Canberra from 7–20 May. Many individuals have considerable reservations about the approach pursued in the Convention. They feel it to be inappropriate for Antarctic claims, originally made in an entirely different legal and political climate, to be in the forefront at the present time and the intention of the treaty to preserve, in effect, the status quo in relation to these claims, to be unfortunate. A commentary on the Convention and a report of the conference are planned for the next issue of the journal.*

*Despite rumours to the effect that efforts to revise and update the International Whaling Convention were being dropped by the Parties to that Convention, a new initiative is now being taken. Immediately before this year's Consultative Meeting of the Parties in July, a special session is being held to discuss the possible amendment of the text. A report on these deliberations will also be included in the next issue.*

*The Sessional Committee of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) recently discussed the work of the Senior Advisers to ECE governments on environmental problems. A Declaration of Policy on Prevention and Control of Water Pollution, including Transboundary Pollution, was adopted and approval was given to the programme of work concerning the Protection of Flora and Fauna and their Habitats. A full report of the meeting will be featured in the Autumn issue. □*