

# EDITORIAL

*The tenor of recent international conferences has shown that the times are not auspicious for the provision of additional resources and, in particular, the creation of new international institutions. The UNEP Governing Council (see page 102), the UN Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy (Nairobi, 10–20 August) and the Conference on Least Developed Countries (Paris, September), are cases in point.*

*Some may feel that the recent decisions at the LOS conference are an exception to this rule, but these decisions (Jamaica as site of the sea-bed authority, Hamburg as the site of the LOS tribunal), were, in reality, reached some time ago, and were simply formally confirmed.*

*Most space in this issue has been devoted to the 9th session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme. It was a tough meeting with strong participation. Statements were made by 61 governments – more than ever before. At the same time, however, it can be seen from the number of those voting on the various resolutions that some states did not really participate at all.*

*During the general statement period, and in the full plenary meetings, international political questions arose which had nothing directly to do with the environment. Many of the governments and representatives there must have forgotten that UNEP as a whole operates on a voluntary basis and the consensus system, and that divisive political decisions are very damaging, especially if the Executive-Director is pressed to follow such majority resolutions, whose enforcement would jeopardize this basis. Perhaps some reform is necessary, and the Canadian proposal (see page 145) aims in this direction.*

*There was not sufficient space to describe the pleasant social events which took place during the session, but without the opportunity of private consultations which these afforded, it would have been more difficult to carry out the work accomplished.*

*The energy conference, in the words of Maurice Strong, “provided a timely reminder that despite the current oil glut, the world still faces an energy crisis*

*in making the long and difficult transition from dependence on low cost oil to other sources”. But the fact that the formal agenda was restricted to “new and renewable” energy sources – many of which were neither new nor renewable, and specifically excluded oil and nuclear energy, illustrates the political sensitivities which continue to constrain the international dialogue on energy issues. Those who are aware of how the energy crisis can fundamentally affect the environment, are very conscious of the implications the present situation may have.*

*When one considers that the World Bank estimates that the total capital needs of developing countries for energy investment alone over the next decade will amount to between US \$ 60 - 80 billion, then the delegates at the Paris LDC conference can have received little hope from the statement by the US delegate, insisting that the said countries must lower their expectations with regard to development aid and must take a more realistic view of their situation.*

*For even the most modest expectations and most realistic attitude cannot alter the fact that almost insurmountable problems confront these countries. In all Western countries we have had to lower our expectations, sometimes more than we would have wished. But capital must be available to the developing countries if resources are to be properly managed, and to pay for technology to both conserve and develop them, according to the draft text of a World Charter for Nature and the guidelines laid down in the World Conservation Strategy. It can only be hoped that the conference, still in session, will agree to make more resources available to those most in need.*

*At the preparatory meeting for the ad hoc meeting of Senior Government Officials Expert in Environmental Law (scheduled to be held in Montevideo at the end of October), the developing countries expressed their intense interest and concern in the development and enforcement of environmental law and the hope that the necessary assistance for monitoring and implementation would be forthcoming. A full report of the Montevideo meeting will be published in a forthcoming issue. □*