

other hand, well-protected species such as the American Alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) were shown to have recovered, and so controlled commercial exploitation was now being authorized. A similar proposal to permit trade in the South American Vicuña (*Vicugna vicugna*) was defeated after heavy lobbying by conservationists and in opposition to favourable reports from Peru and Chile.

The Conference highlighted the need for improved surveillance and, above all, reliable trade statistics from all member states. Delegates agreed to finance these and other administrative tasks jointly by direct government contributions towards a \$1,000,000 fund under United Nations auspices over the next two years, following a treaty amendment for this purpose. The next regular conference on the CITES Convention is scheduled to be held in India in February 1981. Further information may be obtained from the undersigned.

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THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE, HELD IN THE PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, 27 MARCH–6 APRIL AND 23–28 APRIL 1979

Environmental matters were a principal item on the Commission's agenda this year, as they have been during the three preceding sessions in 1976, 1977, and 1978. They were the main reason why the Commission, for the first time since it was created in 1947, was unable to complete its business in the time allotted and had to reconvene a few weeks later. Several difficulties were eventually resolved and, among its other decisions, the Commission agreed to convene a 'high-level meeting on the protection of the environment from 13–16 November 1979'.

The high-level meeting, the first of its kind to be convened at ministerial level among the thirty-four ECE members from North America and western and eastern Europe (including the USSR), stems from both political and environmental initiatives during the 1970s. One 'parent' is of course the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment which was held in Stockholm in 1972 and, within ECE, the Prague Symposium on Problems Relating to Environment which had been held in 1971. Although ECE had been active in water problems before this time, the Prague symposium marked the beginning of a broader environmental concern, accompanied by the creation, also in 1971, of the body of Senior Advisors to ECE Governments on Environmental Problems as the principal continuing subsidiary body of ECE dealing with matters of environmental concern.

The other main 'parent' of the high-level meeting was the 'Helsinki Final Act' of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. This foresaw the desirability of closer cooperation on environmental matters within the framework of ECE and the United Nations Environment Programme. At the 1976 session of the Commission, the Soviet Union proposed that 'all-European congresses or inter-state conferences on cooperation in

the field of protection of the environment, development of transport, and energy', should be convened to implement the relevant provisions of the Final Act. For the last two years and more the Senior Advisors, at the request of the Commission, have undertaken the detailed preparatory work for such a meeting on the environment.

This preparatory work had to meet a number of criteria which had been set by the Commission—namely that a meeting of this kind 'would require a precise and carefully-prepared [set of] agenda; that the subject-matter should require a high level of representation; that such a meeting should hold promise of important decisions; that the topics for consideration should be of concern to the region as a whole, and not lead to unnecessary duplication of the work of other international organizations'. In deciding to convene the November meeting, the Commission recognized that these criteria had been satisfied.

The agenda of the high-level meeting will include a general debate on the environmental situation in the ECE region—including such topics as long-range transboundary air pollution, low- and non-waste technology, and water pollution including transboundary water pollution. The meeting will also be asked to adopt a Convention and Resolution on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution, and a Declaration of Intent and Recommendations for National Action and International Cooperation including Follow-up Activities within the Framework of the ECE in the field of low- and non-waste technology and reutilization and recycling of wastes.

Negotiation of the draft Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution was a major element in the preparatory work undertaken by the Senior Advisers; the topic was one of the specific fields for environmental cooperation mentioned in the Helsinki Final Act. The Convention will be open for signature by all ECE members, by countries such as Liechtenstein that participate in ECE work on a consultative basis, and by 'regional economic integration organizations, constituted by sovereign States members of the ECE, which have competence in respect of the negotiation, conclusion, and application, of international agreements in matters covered by the ... Convention.' (At the present time, this provision enables the European Economic Community to become a signatory).

Among other clauses, the draft Convention provides that 'Taking due account of the facts and problems involved, the Parties are determined to protect Man and his environment against air pollution and will endeavour to limit and, as far as possible, gradually reduce and prevent air pollution, including long-range transboundary air pollution'. Although the Convention will enter into force only when it has been ratified by twenty-four countries, the accompanying Resolution to be submitted at the high-level meeting contains an affirmation that signatories to the Convention will immediately cooperate on the problems and begin to implement the Convention on a provisional basis.

The high-level meeting will therefore represent the culmination of several years of detailed preparations, but the decisions that it will be asked to take on long-range transboundary air pollution, and on low- and non-waste technology and reutilization and recycling of wastes, will initiate a period of closer international cooperation on these and perhaps other environmental problems.

The experience of the preparatory process has also encouraged the Commission to take further steps towards a possible high-level meeting on energy, particularly in establishing, on an *ad hoc* basis, the Senior Advisers to ECE Governments on Energy as a new principal subsidiary body. In view of the close links that exist between environment and energy (which are evident in all the principal items for decision at the high-level meeting in November), this new initiative is likely to effect the in-depth review of the ECE work programme in the field of environment '... from the point of view of concentration, integration, and coordination', which the thirty-fourth session of the Commission also requested be undertaken during the next twelve months.

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AACHEN CONGRESS ON 'PREVENTION OF TRANSFRONTIER POLLUTION AND COOPERATION BETWEEN LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES', HELD AT THE 'EUROGRESS', AACHEN, WEST GERMANY, 3-5 APRIL 1979

At the close of this 'Aachen Congress on the Prevention of Transfrontier Pollution', the 200 or so representatives of local and regional authorities in Europe, and of transfrontier organizations, launched an urgent appeal to the member States of the Council of Europe* for the immediate adoption of the draft European outline Convention on transfrontier cooperation between territorial communities or authorities. They also called for the setting up of a special body to organize an exchange of information and experience on all matters relating to cooperation across frontiers and assist local and regional authorities in implementing the outline Convention.

The Congress, organized by the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, took stock of national, regional, and local, experiments in transfrontier cooperation in Europe, and of the activities of the international organizations in this field. It also considered the question of establishing international pollution standards.

In their final declaration, the participants called for broader decentralization of powers of transfrontier cooperation to municipalities and regions, as these are the best framework for the prevention and control of pollution. Further, they stressed the need for local and regional, elected representatives to be associated with existing inter-state commissions. The establishment of mixed regional commissions (comprising representatives of central, regional, and local, governments and outside experts) received much encouragement from the Congress.

The states of Europe were also urged to harmonize their environmental protection policies, particularly by

the following means:

- Mutual consultation on all activities entailing a risk of pollution across frontiers;
- Equal access to information and assistance for citizens on both sides of a frontier;
- Application of the principle of non-discrimination, obliging the states or competent authorities to take account of environmental protection in the neighbouring states when carrying out ecological impact studies and public inquiries; and
- Application of the 'polluter pays' principle in the case of transfrontier pollution.

Lastly, the Congress proposed that a meeting of regions bordering the Rhine, and another meeting of regions in the Mediterranean, should be held in order to discuss as a matter of priority the serious pollution problems affecting those regions.

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IMPORTANT PROSPECT: SYMPOSIUM ON THE EFFECTS OF AIRBORNE POLLUTION ON VEGETATION, TO BE HELD IN WARSAW, POLAND, DURING 20-24 AUGUST 1979

An important international, intergovernmental 'Symposium on the Effects of Airborne Pollution on Vegetation' is being held in August of this year, under the auspices of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (covering Europe, USSR, and North America) with the support of UNEP.

After introductory papers on the types of airborne pollutants and their transport, participants will discuss in some detail their effects (headings include morphological, physiological, and biochemical, effects, integrative effects on ecosystems, effects on product quality, comparative sensitivities of vegetation types, reactions to subnecrotic pollution, identification of resistant or tolerant strains, etc.). However, the Symposium is intended to go beyond purely scientific topics, although these will be at the heart of the discussions; for monitoring methods and systems, economic assessment of damage, and criteria for legislation, will also be discussed.

The subject of air pollution effects takes on a special importance in the light of efforts by ECE governments to draw up a Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, which should be signed at a high-level meeting in November 1979.* The Symposium will take place from 20 to 24 August and be preceded by a study tour from 17 to 19 August. Further details are available from the ECE/FAO Agriculture and Timber Division, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10.

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*Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

*See the project mentioned by Dr C. Ian Jackson in his account of the latest Session of the Economic Commission for Europe, published on pp. 163-4 of this issue.—Ed.