

nications system, and encouragement of technological cooperation and of training programmes in the region.

The Barcelona Conference is a good example of states overcoming political differences in order to resolve a problem which transgresses national boundaries. Solutions to such problems are always numerous and multifaceted, as is evidenced in the four-part Mediterranean Action Plan adopted in 1975. Yet, the Conference of Plenipotentiaries brings to mind the importance of the law-making process as a management tool for implementing solutions that have been cooperatively agreed to at the international or regional level.

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FOURTH SESSION OF THE SENIOR ADVISERS
 TO ECE GOVERNMENTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS,
 HELD IN THE PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND,
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The fourth meeting of the Senior Advisers on Environmental Problems (SAEP) was something of a landmark in the short history of this body. As the Principal Subsidiary Body of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) having primary responsibility for environmental problems, the SAEP not only has its own extensive activities in this field but also the mandate to ensure (with the collaboration of other subsidiary bodies of a more sectoral nature) the development of a closely-knit environmental effort within the ECE.

What was so special about the fourth session of the SAEP? Most significant of all, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) had only recently been concluded, culminating in the historic signing in Helsinki of its 'Final Act' by thirty-five Heads of Government. One of the more important sections of this document dealt with problems of environment, wherein the participating states came to full agreement concerning the aims, areas, forms, and methods, of cooperation. With regard to forms and methods, they further agreed to advocate:

'the inclusion where appropriate and possible, of the various areas of cooperation into the programmes of work of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, supporting such cooperation within the framework of the Commission and of the United Nations Environment Programme, and taking into account the work of other competent international organizations of which they (the signatories) are members'.

Thus, at this fourth session, the Senior Advisers on Environmental Problems were already beginning to feel the weight of this new and important responsibility settling upon their shoulders.

The most immediate evidence of this new responsibility was the decision by the Senior Advisers to incorporate into their programme of work two specific projects on which special attention had been focused in the Final Act of the CSCE:

- (1) The development, through international cooperation, of an extensive programme for the monitoring and evaluation of the long-range transport of air pollutants, starting with sulphur dioxide and with possible extension to other pollutants. — It was agreed that this project would be carried out in close collaboration with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and an invitation was extended to the United Nations Environ-

ment Programme (UNEP) to assist in the implementation of the overall effort.

- (2) A study concerning the capabilities of member governments to predict adequately the environmental consequences of economic activities and technological development. — The assessment of environmental impact is a basic instrument designed to aid governments in formulating not only their environmental policies but also their economic and social policies.

Another development which aroused great interest at this session of the SAEP was the in-depth discussion on environmental policies and strategies. The topic which had been pre-selected for an all-day discussion was 'The Ecological Aspects of Economic Development Planning'—a topic which had been the subject of a major ECE seminar held in Rotterdam in mid-1975 under the chairmanship of Professor Jan Tinbergen. The Rotterdam seminar had provided a first opportunity within the ECE for ecologists, economists, and physical planners, to come together for an exchange of information and experience on comprehensive planning issues. Building on the foundation of that seminar, the Senior Advisers focused their attention on practical methods for integrating ecological considerations into socio-economic development planning. The follow-up activities agreed upon by the Senior Advisers include:

- (a) The elaboration of a conceptual framework for integrated planning. — The essential task here is to reduce this broad subject to a manageable scale and to present relevant information and data in a form useful to decision-makers;
- (b) A study on 'Environmental Perspective'. — This study would not be a mechanical evaluation of the environmental consequences of present economic trends; instead, taking into account the growing determination (by governments and citizens alike) to halt the deterioration of the environment, the study would consider the measures which must be taken towards this goal and the impact of these measures both on the economy and on society; and
- (c) A study on the ways and means for ensuring participation of the general public and of non-governmental organizations in the debate during the planning process.

The incorporation of the above five items into the programme of the SAEP is a clear indication of a significant shift in emphasis of the work of that body. Greater stress is now being laid on planning and management problems, i.e. on preventive policies, rather than on anti-pollution measures *per se*.

Finally, during the latter part of the session, the Senior Advisers turned to a review of (and guidance concerning) their extensive on-going programme of work (including a close collaborative effort with UNEP). Among other things, they instituted a specific procedure for a continuing evaluation of the usefulness and effectiveness of each and every pertinent project.

All in all, it was a full and stimulating session, heralding an era of intensified environmental activity on problems of critical importance and concern to the ECE member governments. These represent thirty-four countries of North America, Western Europe, and Eastern Europe (including the Soviet Union).

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