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OCSEAP (1979d). *Environmental Assessment of the Alaskan Continental Shelf, Interim Synthesis Report: Kodiak*. Outer Continental Shelf Environmental Assessment Program, Boulder, Colorado: xv + 215 pp., illustr.

### Third World Needs Improved Control of Pesticides

The setting up of national control agencies for the registration of all pesticides is a major priority for developing countries. This was stated by a WHO Expert Committee on the Safe Use of Pesticides which met in Geneva recently. The Committee, which for the first time included a majority of members from developing countries, devoted most of its time to studying the needs of the Third World for ensuring the safe use of pesticides. No detailed statistics are available, but it has been estimated that some 500,000 people throughout the world are either killed or incapacitated by insecticide poisoning every year.

It was generally accepted at the Expert Committee that little information reaches farmers and even the knowledge available is often not put to use. There is an urgent need for well-trained personnel to instruct farmers in the choice of pesticides, their storage and application techniques, the use of protective measures, and the safe disposal of pesticide containers.

The proposed national control agencies should not only register compounds but also evaluate needs and control the introduction of pesticides. Health information and health education are important components of such programmes, and the agencies should have the capacity to provide advice to all those who are concerned with the use of pesticides.

The Committee generally agreed on the need for an increasing use of pesticides to meet public health requirements in the control of disease and to increase food production. They were aware, however, that increased use of pesticides raises environmental and other problems, and stated that the benefit-risk evaluation will differ in each case.

At present, Third World countries are importing considerable amounts of pesticides, but it is expected that, in the future, an increasing number will prepare their own formulations and manufacture their own products. Thus it will be the responsibility of national governments to ensure good manufacturing practices and adequate control of quality and use. WHO, FAO, ILO, and other international agencies, are ready to support such activities by providing consultants and by continuing to publish and circulate information on pesticides. The WHO/FAO data sheets on pesticides and other information on pesticide use have been of great value to developing countries, it was affirmed.

World Health Organization  
Avenue Appia  
1211 Geneva 27  
Switzerland.

### IUCN/WWF Concern Over Seal Harvests

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) have expressed concern at the level of Canada's annual harvest of Harp Seals (*Pagophilus groenlandicus*). These sister organizations have pointed out that, although the Harp Seal is not at present an endangered species, its numbers have become seriously depleted—which circumstance has precipitated the need for effective management that should conform to sound principles of conservation. They emphasized the need also for more and better information on these Seals and the ecosystems of which they form an integral part, and noted with satisfaction that the Canadians had already initiated a research programme towards meeting some of the above-expressed concern.

IUCN and WWF endorsed Canada's expressed policy of increasing the depleted Harp Seal population, but could not accept that a harvest of 180,000 at this time was consistent with this policy. The 'single species' models used to arrive at this quota, they feel, took insufficient account of uncertainties in available data, of important aspects of the Harp Seal's biology, of environmental factors, and of the herd's relationship with other species—for example, depletion of the Seal's food-stocks, including Capelin (*Mallotus villosus*), owing to over-fishing in Canadian waters. In combination these

factors could well affect the assessment of what is an acceptable level of harvest from the standpoint of recovery of the Harp Seal population and the health of the marine ecosystem of which it is a part.

The same organizations are also concerned that, owing to an increased kill by the potentially less controllable land-based hunt (as compared with the large-vessels' hunt), a significantly higher proportion of older seals was taken last year than in previous years. The models which determine the quotas are based on the assumption that only 20% of the animals killed will be one-year-old or older. Last year the proportion was around 25%. If this were to become a regular pattern of the hunt, the proportion of breeding animals would be reduced. This should be taken into account in fixing quotas.

IUCN and WWF also expressed concern at the status of the Hooded Seal (*Cystophora cristata*) about which much less is known than about the Harp Seal, but which may also be in need of stronger conservation measures than are currently being taken.

David Mitchell, *Director of Public Affairs*  
World Wildlife Fund International  
1110 Morges  
Switzerland.