

## NOTES, NEWS & COMMENTS

### Renewal of Environmental Exchanges Between United States and Soviet Union

One happy result of the November Summit Meeting in Geneva between President Ronald Reagan and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev was a decision to renew the environmental protection exchange between their two countries. Originally agreed to in 1972 at the Summit Meeting between Richard Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev, the environmental protection exchange agreement was perhaps the most fully developed of all the joint programmes that evolved in the years of 'detente'; there had been relatively little bureaucratic nitpicking and remarkably fruitful results. In other words the environmental exchange arrangement had stood in sharp contrast to almost all the other exchanges that were developed in the eight years or so during which such exchanges flourished.

It was not only that the arrangements were relatively amicable, but they were also serious in intent and produced some interesting joint results. In the period from November 1976 to November 1977, for example, there were approximately one hundred joint activities. These included working-group meetings, conferences for specialists on different areas of cooperation, symposia—and, most significantly, joint testing of equipment and verification of research methodology and joint experimentation and expeditions. Specialists were sent to the partner country and worked on site. Some examples of such activity include joint projects in experimental gas desulphurization at Severo Donetsk, which was compared with a similar project in Boston, Massachusetts. In much the same vein a joint project involved the management of water-quality in the Great Lakes and Lake Baikal. Furthermore, in the field of earthquake prediction, American specialists were allowed

to set up and employ for monitoring their own seismic equipment in the Nurek Reservoir SE of Samarkand, while a Soviet team monitored some seismicity in Central California with thirty seismometers of the type used by the Soviets in their Garm region.

In all there had been eleven areas of interaction and activity: (1) Prevention of air pollution; (2) Prevention of water pollution; (3) Prevention of pollution related to agricultural production; (4) Enhancement of the urban environment; (5) Protection of Nature and the organization of preserves; (6) Protection of the marine environment from pollution; (7) Biological and genetic effects of environmental pollution; (8) Influences of environmental changes on climate; (9) Earthquake prediction; (10) Arctic and subarctic ecological systems; and (11) Legal and administrative measures for protecting environmental quality.

In 1977, it was decided to extend the agreement for five years, until 1982. Unfortunately, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan caused the United States to terminate this and other exchange agreements. With the resumption of summit discussions, the decision has been able to resume such exchange, and presumably the results will be as fruitful if unpublicized as they were before.

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### Plan to Reverse Destruction of Tropical Forests Released by International Task-force

An international task-force, organized by the World Resources Institute, has presented a 56-countries' plan for 'arresting and ultimately reversing' the destruction of tropical forests. The task-force's three-parts' report, *Tropical Forests: A Call for Action*, is sponsored by the World Resources Institute, The World Bank, and the United Nations Development Programme. It was released recently in Washington, DC, and New Delhi, India.

The nine-members' task-force consists of Professor Paulo Nogueira-Neto (Secretary of the Environment, Brazil), Dr T.N. Khoshoo (former Secretary of the Environment, India), Khubchand G. Tejwani (Land-use Consultants International, India), Sir Charles Pereira (former Head, East and Central African Agricultural and Forestry Research Organizations; Former Chief Scientist, Ministry of Agriculture, England, UK), Pedro M. Picornell (Executive Vice-President for Planning, Paper Industries Corporation of the Philippines), Thomas Michael Apsey (President and Chief Executive Officer, Council of Forest Industries of British Columbia, Canada), Salleh Mohamed Nor (Director, Forest Research Institute, Malaysia), John Spears (Senior Forestry Adviser, The World Bank), and Dr Robert E. Buckman (Deputy Chief for Forestry Research, United States Forest Service, Washington, DC, USA).

The task-force recommends public and private investment of \$8 thousand millions (American billions) over the next five years in forestry and related agricultural activities to begin reversing tropical deforestation and its devastating impact on people and the environment. Of this amount, \$5.3 thousand millions would be directed to the 56 most critically affected countries, for which specific investment proposals are presented in the report.

'The plan we are releasing... offers both grounds for hope and a basis for action,' said James Gustave Speth, President of the World Resources Institute, a Washington-based policy-research centre focusing on development and resource issues. 'Its great value is that it moves, beyond documenting the problem, to proposing concrete solutions. It is not just about trees, but about people and their prospects for a better life.'

In India, Dr T.N. Khoshoo, former Secretary of the Environment and a member of the task-force, said: 'The deforestation occurring in the tropics today is one of the great tragedies of our time. It is a classic example of a Third World problem which the industrial nations cannot afford to ignore.'

The report marks the first time that major development assistance agencies and nongovernmental organizations have agreed on solutions addressing tropical deforestation, Mr Speth said: 'These sums are small in relation to the benefits they will realize for the world's developing countries. They can stimulate economic growth and reverse dangerous threats to the Earth's environment.'

The Foreword to 'The Plan' (the first part of the above-cited report) starts by pointing out that 'Throughout history, [tropical forests] have been essential sources of food, fuel, shelter, medicines, and many other products. They sustain people and their environments by protecting soil and water resources and providing habitat for an estimated 50% of the world's plant and animal species.' It is likely that tropical forests also influence regional and global climate.

Every year, however, more than 27 million acres (11 million hectares) of tropical forests—an area larger than

Austria—are lost, according to the report. If tropical forests continue to be cleared at the current rate, at least 556 million acres (225 million hectares) will be destroyed by the year 2000; if destruction of tropical rain-forests continues unabated, an estimated 10% to 20% of the Earth's plant and animal life will be gone by the year 2000.

The report says that 'the real causes of deforestation are poverty, skewed land-distribution, and low agricultural productivity.' At least 30% of the investment proposed in the report would be agriculture-related.

*Tropical Forests: A Call for Action* focuses on translating known solutions and strategies into a five-years' programme of accelerated action that will lay the groundwork for longer-term investment. Examples of successful projects illustrate the range of solutions available. Based on these success stories, and the lessons learned from past failures, high-priority areas for investment and action are proposed. Major policy-issues and constraints that need to be addressed to carry out the programme are specified.

The action programme addresses five issues: fuel-wood and agro-forestry; land-use on upland watersheds; forest management for industrial uses; conservation of tropical forest ecosystems; and strengthening institutions for research, training, and extension.

Among the report's recommendations are:

- *Expenditures* of \$8 thousand millions (US) over five years, half of which would need to be mobilized by development assistance agencies and international lending institutions, with the remainder coming directly from the private sector and the governments of tropical countries.

- *Revision of specified government policies* that encourage exploitation, depletion, or waste, of forest resources.

- *Planning of development projects* in transportation and irrigation to avoid wasting or destroying forest resources, jeopardizing forest conservation areas, or making accessible to settlers those forest areas that are unsuited for sustained agriculture.

- *Establishment of policies* that encourage local participation in rural tree-planting programmes and natural forest management.

- *More extension work* with women, who play an important role in the use and management of trees, and with the 5,000 nongovernmental organizations involved in forestry world-wide.

*Tropical Forests: A Call for Action* has been presented to the World Commission on Environment and Development (at its 28 October 1985 meeting in São Paulo, Brazil) and to development assistance agencies from around the world at a meeting in November 1985 in The Hague, Netherlands. The report contributes to the efforts of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, which declared 1985 the 'International Year of the Forest.' It is available for \$12.50 from WRI Publications, P.O. Box 620, Holmes, Pennsylvania 19043, USA.

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### The International Society for Tropical Ecology

The International Society for Tropical Ecology (ISTE) has now completed publication of the 25th Volume (2 issues per volume) of its journal, *Tropical Ecology*. The Journal publishes research papers and reviews on all aspects of Ecology, from throughout the tropics and subtropics, written in English, French, Portuguese, or Spanish, with their abstracts in all the four languages. The Journal matches other international publications in its scientific content, and is printed on glazed art paper. At present, it usually takes six months for a paper to get published in the *Tropical Ecology* from the date of its acceptance.

The journal is supplied free to all members of ISTE, and is sent by surface mail. Despite heavy publication and other costs, the Society continues to maintain the following annual rates of subscription: Individuals, U.S. Dollars 10 in Developing countries or 20 in Developed countries; Institutions, U.S. Dollars 40 (anywhere).

All persons and institutions interested in tropical ecology are invited to join the Society, and to submit papers for due consideration for publication. Please address enquiries to:

*International Society for Tropical Ecology, c/o Department of Botany, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi 221005, India*—for matters regarding membership, to Professor R.S. Ambasht; for subscriptions, to Professor D.N. Rao; and manuscripts or other matters pertaining to publication, to Dr K.P. Singh.

Currently the Editorial Board of *Tropical Ecology* consists of Professor J.S. Singh (Chief Editor), Dr K.P. Singh (Executive Editor), Professor J.S. Singh & Professor Peter Murphy (English Language Editors), Dr V.M. Meher-Homji (French Language Editor), Dr J. Tundisi (Portuguese Language Editor), Dr S. Guevara (Spanish Language Editor), and Professor D.N. Rao & Dr K.C. Misra (Ex-officio Members).

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### Conservation Research Opportunities at the Wau Ecology Institute, Papua New Guinea

The diverse forests and high mountains of Papua New Guinea offer great opportunities for studies of tropical ecology. Few areas have a greater diversity of species. In the current context of efforts to understand and perpetuate tropical ecosystems, it is important to investigate those of New Guinea, where 70% of the forests are still intact, and natural systems can be studied from sea-level to high elevations.

The Wau Ecology Institute (WEI) is situated advantageously among mountains not far from the north-east coast of the great island (Fig. 1), with access to many altitudes and environments. Indeed the area may be one of the best anywhere for the study of tropical ecology, because of the variety of environments and the lack of a cool or dry season. At 1,200 m the mean annual rainfall is 1900 mm, while the mean temperature is 22°C.