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From one strategy to another

We live indisputably in an age that is both exhilarating and worrying, both marvellous and disturbing. Never before have we had means so powerful and so varied to radically alter our environment: from excavation equipment and other oversized machinery to nuclear and chemical technology. The time when the sorcerer's apprentice could indulge in a few whims and fancies should have long been over ... but I am not so sure it is. The current vogue for greed, the insatiable desire for more, and the all-out conquest of markets are serious obstacles to the application of the concept we call "sustainable development", intended to protect our natural resources for good.

And yet, despite this disenchantment, we have to believe in humankind and fight for what we feel is right and important. I am therefore convinced that regional action remains a priority and, where the protec-

tion of natural resources is concerned, a strategy for the sustainable management of such resources is vital.

This issue of *Naturopa* shows very clearly that these concerns are not really new, and that there is a superabundance of charters, declarations and other strategies in the field.

However, each new initiative brings about - or seeks to bring about - improvements, a new approach to problems, and more effective solutions. This is especially so with the latest addition to the family, the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy.

Let us hope that it will disappoint neither its creators nor future generations. ■

Jean-Pierre Ribaut



R. Decker/Pluriel

Editorial

Putting words into action

Nature conservation has recently come of age. The signing in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the adoption in Sofia in 1995 of the Council of Europe's Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy were great steps forward for nature conservationists. However, they have had to recognise that:

- it will not be possible to protect nature unless an economic value is put on its charms and its riches are managed in a sustainable manner;

- effective and lasting protection will demand the extension of nature conservation into other fields, in particular agriculture, forestry, tourism and transport infrastructures.

Naturalists who prefer wild open spaces and being close to nature are now having to get used to negotiations, conference halls and political discussions. How many times have we had to forego enjoying the wilds to take part instead in the negotiation of charters or conventions or to defend nature against some destructive project?

Yet what is the purpose of it all?

We could be forgiven for wondering about the point of all those weeks spent negotiating often vague and feeble texts, as we struggled for nights on end to reach agreement on single words or sentences.

However, this is the only method we have for developing a policy for the world as a whole. In the first instance, the negotiations mean

finding and learning a common language. They are thus the first step towards shared political objectives and harmonised efforts to implement them.

The fact that we are feeling our way along, step by step, explains why so many texts of differing values and strengths, which often overlap, have been produced. It also explains why many different organisations, all acting



legitimately, sometimes end up competing on the same ground.

This diversity in terms of texts and organisations does reduce efficiency, but it is inevitable at this early stage in the efforts to

develop a global policy. It enables each individual state to find its own particular niche and to take part in the general movement at the level and the pace that suit it. As time passes, the best texts and the best organisations will gain the upper hand and the others will either be forgotten or subsumed in them.

Given the urgency of the problems of nature and the environment, however, we must concentrate on producing precise and binding texts, while equipping conventions with appropriate implementation and supervision machinery and encouraging co-operation and a clear division of responsibilities between multilateral organisations.

The "Environment for Europe" process, which has been marked by the conferences in Dobřiš, Lucerne and Sofia, is a good example of states working together to co-ordinate the activities of many different organisations and to define a common environmental policy. Without depriving any of the parties of their rights, it has increased the efficiency of their work and given the protection of nature and the environment the place it deserves among other sectoral policies.

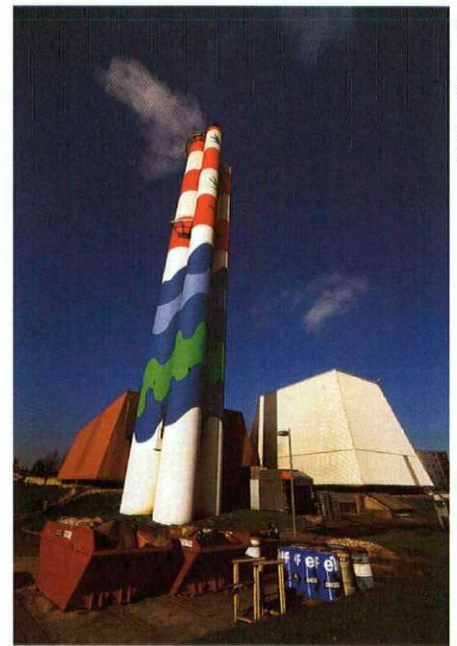
In this sense, the Council of Europe should be congratulated on having incorporated its Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy in the "Environment for Europe" process and on having chosen to implement it in close co-operation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and all the parties involved. ■

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F. Roubert



Y. Noto-Camparella

In the seventies, attention focused on protecting certain habitats or elements such as water or air

FROM STOCKHOLM TO POST-RIO

A quarter century of environmental law and policy

Alexandre Kiss

In the short time during which they have existed - a quarter of a century approximately - environmental law and policy have undergone unparalleled growth. Today there are tens of thousands of national laws, and all countries now have environmental protection legislation. In addition, there are some 900 international texts - mainly multilateral or bilateral treaties, but also a number of instruments which are not formally binding - as well as over 200 European Union instruments. This growth in volume terms has been matched by an improvement in quality, affecting both the perception of environmental problems and ways of tackling them. This is true at national, international and EU level.

It has been a complex development mirroring the way the world has been developing in general, and can be divided into three main trends.

Regulation: legislation and policy

Even before the Stockholm Conference, awareness of environmental degradation had sparked off a process of both national and international legislation on an increasing scale. The Council of Europe broke new ground in 1968 by adopting the Declaration of Principles on Air Pollution Control, the European Water Charter and an agreement on the use of detergents in washing products. However, while the Stockholm Conference in 1972 was the real starting-point for environmental protection in general, the texts adopted there had very little actual legal content and basically concerned bilateral relations between states with regard to transfrontier pollution (principles 21 and 22 of the Stockholm Declaration). Whatever one's views of the Rio de Janeiro Conference, it did produce results that were far more substantial from this point of view: the signature of two

major conventions on climate change and preservation of biodiversity, and the proclamation in the Rio Declaration of a whole series of legal principles (principles 2, 10, 11, 13-15, 17, 18 and 19).

Between the two conferences and since Rio, there have been two stages in attempts to regulate the questions.

The first, mainly during in the 1970s, gave priority to the protection of certain physical aspects of the environment and led to international laws and treaties for the protection of the sea, continental waters and air against pollution and the protection of wild flora and fauna through appropriate measures, including the protection of habitats. This approach, where the emphasis was on the most urgent tasks, was to be supplemented - but not replaced - by a second series of rules, mainly in the 1980s, aimed at tackling the causes of environmental degradation: particular sub-

stances, waste and radioactive matter and also activities detrimental to the environment.

Nevertheless, these developments have apparently not been able to solve certain environmental problems, the significance of which has gradually become apparent, such as pollution caused by farming and transport. As a result there has been an attempt to place environmental protection in the wider context of overall policies. It is something of a paradox that at the same time, the planning originally advocated has often been discarded or at least criticised.

From planning to the triumph of the market economy

The first major international texts placed considerable emphasis on planning as a key to environmental protection. Principle 2 of the Stockholm Declaration of 1972 is a prime example: it recommends that the world's natural resources be safeguarded "for the benefit of present and future generations through careful planning or management as appropriate". There are other principles in a similar vein (principles 4, 13, 14, 17). Ten years later, the World Charter for Nature, adopted and solemnly proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly on 28 October 1982, also refers to planning and implementation of development activities which must take due account of the fact that nature conservation is an integral part of such activities (principle 7 and also principles 8, 9, 17 and 18).

The collapse of the European communist regimes, and with them the collapse of the planned economies, has almost certainly had a major effect on the general direction of environmental policies. From 1990 onwards texts very rarely refer to planning in the interests of the environment, or even the use of plans for this purpose. Regional planning methods still survive at national level, but they seem to have been greatly influenced by the trend towards decentralisation. Instead, there is a growing move towards economic methods such as taxes, tradable permits, refundable deposits, insurance, loans and subsidies, and the eco-label. Characteristically, the "polluter pays" principle, conceived originally as an accounting procedure for the allocation of costs, has been elevated to the level of a legal principle, whereas it can work counter to development aid.

Alongside this development which effectively rejects the command-and-control mechanisms of regulation, producers appear to have grasped the significance of public opinion and its concern about the environment. This is evidenced by the current profusion of codes of good conduct and product standards defined for various sectors. Indeed, there is a tendency for the role of the state and macro-economic approaches to make way for micro-economic and proactive methods. The question is whether long-term forecasts, and indeed the public interest inherent in environmental protection, may not suffer as a result.

Environment and development

At the beginning of the "ecological era" some of the developing countries had little interest in environmental questions, which were viewed as a disease of the wealthier countries. Problems such as the difficulty of finding drinking water, desertification, and mushrooming conurbations surrounded by shanty towns have shown that the curse of environmental degradation is everywhere and is likely to affect the poor more than the rich. "Exporting pollution" - ie pollutant substances, waste and activities - to the Third World has also led to greater awareness. Furthermore, with the globalisation of environmental problems - depletion of the ozone layer, changes in the world climate, reduction of biodiversity - the countries of the North have at long last realised that the earth's environment cannot be protected without the South. They have therefore been obliged to encourage co-operation from poorer countries by promising them more aid. This has led to the concept of sustainable development, ie seeking to satisfy present needs without mortgaging the future. It brings together two concepts which for a long time were viewed as antagonistic: development and environmental protection.

Is assessment possible?

It has to be acknowledged that the somewhat linear momentum in environmental policy has in recent years been succeeded by a period marked by methods that are less clear or at

any event more complex. While the incorporation of environmental rules and policies into wider sectoral policies, and especially into development policies, raises some challenging problems, the great unknown is whether market forces, now all-powerful, will make protection of the environment possible. Perhaps the only answer which can be given at present is that the public must remain conscious and vigilant, both individually and collectively. The growing trend for rules and action enabling citizens to be better informed about the environment, to take part in the decision-making process and to have available to them practical forms of redress, is reassuring in this connection. It is essential that these principles form part of everyone's education. Here too, the Council of Europe has a vital role to play. ■

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Women collecting drinking water, Bombay, India

Evolving towards sustainable development

Alexandre Timoshenko

The developments in environmental protection during the past decades reveal the evolving process of integrating environment and development. The process started in the early 1970s during the preparation for the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, resulted at UNCED into political legitimisation of the concept of sustainable development and was materialised in a long-term and wide-ranging programme of action - Agenda 21.

Integrating environment and development

The 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment was the first global expression of governments' concern over the deteriorating environment. Indeed, the conference culminated in an impressive set of decisions, recommendations and principles which led to a sequence of concerted action by states manifested through various international programmes and agreements, and to important institutional developments. The conference not only made a direct impact on the UN system by leading to the creation of its central environmental body - the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) - but also influenced major regional organisations in bringing environment to a higher stand within the frameworks of regional co-operation.

During the next twenty years many goals set up in the Stockholm Action Plan have been achieved. The international environmental co-operation incited by Stockholm decisions resulted in considerable improvements in monitoring and assessment of the state of the global environment and in a much clearer scientific understanding of major ecological interrelations. Further on, not only new environmental challenges were revealed and apprehended but respective remedial means were agreed and put into practice. This has been particularly visible in vigorous development of international legal regulation in the field of environment. Indeed, the corpus of international environmental law has grown to hundreds of international multilateral treaties directly related to environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources.

Insufficient action

Still, the action taken by the international community in the aftermath of Stockholm was not sufficient to arrest and reverse environmental degradation. However, without action envisaged by the Stockholm Conference and undertaken by states, this degradation would undoubtedly turn into a full-scale environmental destruction.

To further review the ecological situation in the world and to provide governments with a

forum to agree on more decisive measures, the United Nations convened in Rio de Janeiro in May 1992 the Conference of Environment and Development (UNCED). The Rio Summit, which brought together more than 150 heads of state, came up with decisions putting environmental protection in a new context of sustainable development. Indeed, sustainable development was a major thrust and paradigm of UNCED.

One may rightfully point out that the sustainable development component was already visible prior to the Rio Summit. In fact, considerable parts of the Stockholm Declaration and Action Plan were aimed at integrating environmental and developmental concerns. Major international conventions, adopted as a response to the Stockholm mandate, in particular those regulating protection of the ozone layer, use of transboundary waters and regional seas, handling and disposal of hazardous wastes, as well as those providing instruments of regional co-operation in combatting transboundary air pollution, mitigating environmental impacts of industrial accidents and promoting environmental impact assessment, are closely related to the objective of making economic and social development environmentally sustainable.

Inheritance

The inheritance of Stockholm perceptions by UNCED can also be seen if comparing the structure of the resulting documents adopted by the two conferences. Indeed, both conferences agreed on declarations of principles, action plans and institutional arrangements.

Though structured in a more complicated way, the Stockholm Action Plan focused on selected substantive areas in the same manner as it has been done in Agenda 21. A number of principles of the Stockholm Declaration have been further developed or built upon in the Rio Declaration. While the Stockholm Conference made recommendations for institutional arrangements which called for the creation of UNEP, the Rio Summit included in Agenda 21 a special Chapter 38 (International institutional arrangements) which led to establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development and reviewed the role and mandate of other environment-related agencies.

Apparent similarities between results of the Stockholm and Rio conferences do not deny evident differences. In fact, Agenda 21 is not only a better organised document indicating, in a well structured manner for each identified programme area, the objectives, activities and means of implementation. It also includes a number of new perceptions and concepts: from combatting poverty and changing consumption patterns to strengthening the role of major groups and recommending innovative means of implementation.

Sustainable development

The content of the Rio Declaration clearly reflects the growing impact of the sustainable development perceptions. The well-known transformation of the text of principle 21 of the Stockholm Declaration into principle 2 of the Rio Declaration by addition of "development policies", to be pursued together with



The survival of the kingfisher will depend on the protection of its habitats

F. Roubert

environmental policies in exercising the sovereign right to exploit resources, does not obligatorily mean diluting the environmental thrust of the principle, but rather indicates the political commitment to further integrate environment and development. The fundamental nature of the principle, which makes the obligation not to cause environmental damage a *conditio sine qua non* of resource exploitation, has been consistently reaffirmed by its gradual integration into treaty law, the most recent example being the Convention on Biological Diversity, signed during UNCED, which in its operative part reproduced verbatim the text of principle 21 of the Stockholm Declaration.

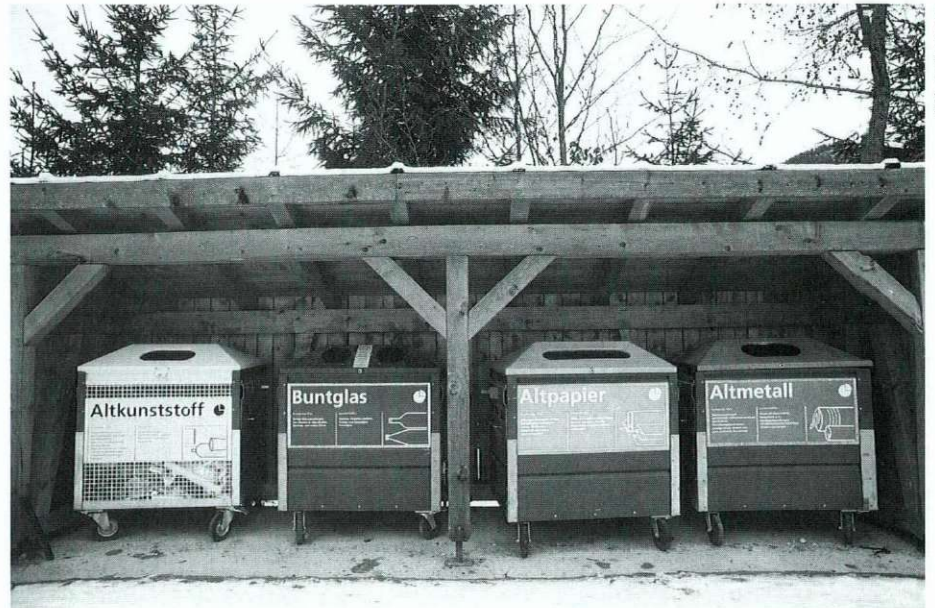
The pursuit of sustainable development is obvious all through the Rio Declaration, which brought global political legitimacy to a number of new and innovative concepts and ideas, such as entitlement to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature, eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, global partnership and common but differentiated responsibilities, eliminating unsustainable production and consumption patterns and promoting appropriate demographic policies, public access to environmental information and decision-making, precautionary approach and "polluter pays" principle. Some of these concepts and ideas may as well be cross-referenced to relevant parts of Agenda 21 and of the Rio conventions - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and Convention on Biological Diversity.

International law

The last principle 27 of the Rio Declaration calls for "further development of international law in the field of sustainable development", which in combination with similar requirements contained in Chapter 39 of Agenda 21 gave rise to questions about their interrelatedness with progressive development of international environmental law. Indeed, Agenda 21 in its Chapter 38 identified as one of the priority areas for action "further development of international environmental law, in particular conventions and guidelines". It appears that references to international law in the field of sustainable development should rather be viewed as providing a new context or an overall "sustainable development umbrella" for further development of international environmental law, in order to ensure proper attention to the delicate balance between environmental and developmental concerns. The latter is considered to be a prerequisite for building up realistic and effective legal regimes for both environmental protection and sustainable development.

Institutional developments

In terms of institutional developments brought by UNCED, the major one was the



Sorting of waste, an example of citizens contributing to sustainable development

establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). Formally a subsidiary body of ECOSOC, the CSD was charged with an impressive list of functions in monitoring the progress of implementation or Agenda 21 by national governments, bodies and organisations of the UN system and by non-governmental, scientific and private sector organisations. Another body created as UNCED follow-up is the High-level Advisory Board, consisting of eminent persons broadly representative of all regions of the world, to advise the Secretary General in formulating policy proposals, elaborating innovative approaches and identifying emerging issues.

The creation of the CSD and other bodies led to some reshaping of the UN machinery, including the structural adjustments to the UN Secretariat in order to provide organisational and logistical back-up to the CSD. The CSD itself took a number of organisational steps to create a coherent and credible system for monitoring the implementation of Agenda 21, in particular by adopting the Multi-year Programme of Work and co-operating with the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) and a network of task managers responsible for various chapters and programme areas of Agenda 21.

The outcome of UNCED has impacted both within and outside the UN system. UNEP, UNDP, the World Bank and most specialised agencies have been affected. The UN regional commissions as well as the regional development banks were given new tasks to expand and improve regional co-operation and co-ordination in sustainable development. The global process of "greening" the international institutions has also had an impact on the private sector, including business and industry.

Being the major institutional outcome of the Stockholm Conference, UNEP was reaffirmed by UNCED as the principal organisa-

tion in the environmental field. UNEP was assigned with a new and additional mandate for sustainable development: among others, to promote international co-operation in environmental policy, monitoring and assessment, early warning and general information dissemination and awareness-raising. One of the specific areas UNEP should concentrate on was further development of international environmental law, in particular conventions and guidelines, promotion of its implementation, and co-ordinating functions arising from an increasing number of international legal agreements, *inter alia*, the functioning of the secretariats of the Conventions. The UNEP mandate as assigned by Agenda 21 was further confirmed by its Governing Council which translated it in concrete action.

An overview of the way leading from the Stockholm Conference to the Rio Summit and beyond clearly reveals the availability of necessary political commitment, legal arrangements and organisational means to establish a global regime of sustainable development. The next step would be to intensify concrete and focused action needed for making the world in the 21st century environmentally sound and sustainable. ■

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The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Environment Programme.



Biosphere reserve, Ponant islands, France

Y. Arthus Bertrand/Earth from above/UNESCO

experts, made it possible to compare experience, which often differed greatly, and to bring out the richness of the concept and its implementation.

In some countries, biosphere reserves have become a practical tool for spatial planning and a framework for co-ordination with local authorities. For example, the Rhoën biosphere reserve in Germany extends over three Länder, which co-operate in its management. The physical size of biosphere reserves has also grown as a result: entire islands such as Minorca or Lanzarote in Spain or the Ponant Islands of France have been designated as biosphere reserves, thus permitting a global approach to the problems of managing and protecting terrestrial and marine environments they raise.

UNESCO, by helping to set up transfrontier biosphere reserves, like the one between Poland and Slovakia in the Tatra, but also in other regions of the world, is also helping to strengthen the links between formerly isolated countries.

In Europe for example, as in the rest of the world, biosphere reserves make it clear that any action taken for the conservation of natural resources and their use on a sustainable basis must be rooted in the traditions of the societies concerned and enjoy their full support. Seen in this light the message of the Seville Strategy is highly promising for the future. ■

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The Seville Strategy

Pierre Lasserre

A new concept: between conservation and development

“**B**iosphere reserves were poised to take on a new role. Not only will they be a means for the people who live and work within and around them to attain a balanced relationship with the natural world, they will also contribute to the needs of society, as a whole, by showing a way to a more sustainable future. This is at the heart of the Seville vision for biosphere reserves in the 21st century.”

This extract from the Seville Strategy provides a good illustration of the way biosphere reserves have developed from the time they were conceived, in the early days of UNESCO's MAB Programme in 1974, essentially as research and conservation tools. Even then, however, the purpose was already to create a new type of protected areas in which human activities, far from being forbidden, would be fully integrated into the area concerned.

Three functions

Each biosphere reserve is intended to fulfil three functions: a **conservation function**, to preserve genetic resources, species, ecosystems and landscapes; a **development function**, to foster sustainable economic and human development; and a **logistic support function**, to encourage and support activities related to research, education, training and continued monitoring. Each reserve is divided into zones defined by the various activities corresponding to these three functions: one or more core areas set aside for long-term protection; a buffer zone or zones in which only activities compatible with conservation objectives are allowed, and a transition area - or area of co-operation - which may contain agricultural activities, settlements or other undertakings; it is here that local communi-

ties, management agencies, scientists, non-governmental organisations and cultural groups - in short, all stakeholders - work together to manage and develop the region's resources on a sustainable basis.

One-third of the network in Europe

Such a framework is particularly suited to the European context as Europe is a continent long settled by human beings in which, for that very reason, nature conservation is faced with special difficulties. Of some 330 biosphere reserves comprised in the World Network, about a third are situated in Europe. Admittedly, not all of these function perfectly. But the Seville Conference in March 1995, which was attended by some 400

Schematic zonation of a biosphere reserve



Strategies at IUCN

Liz Hopkins

Politicians have accepted the need to protect the environment as an essential part of sustainable development, but have not yet matched their rhetoric with appropriate action.

Rio sidestepped the fundamental issues that cause environmental degradation and lack of development - the distorted world economic and trading system, the crippling burden of international debt, the resources sucked into the arms race, and the lack of effective government in some countries. In particular Rio evaded the central issue of how to bring human populations into balance with the natural systems that sustain them. Agenda 21 deals with symptoms - pollution and habitat loss, for example - rather than causes. The follow-up to Rio has been disappointing, with the developed countries committing little if any of the additional money and human resources that are so desperately needed.

It is sobering to realise that after four decades of hard work, and despite many successes, the world conservation movement has not yet established a global commitment to care for the earth and its people.

Caring for the earth

IUCN's prescription to address these issues is *Caring for the Earth: a strategy for sustainable living*. It is both a statement of principles and a set of precise actions needed to achieve results. And, unlike other international documents, it both recognised the need for social advance and reaffirms the need for conservation of nature and natural resources. *Caring for the Earth* is a follow-up to the World Conservation Strategy produced by IUCN in 1980. It was the WCS that first coined the term "sustainable development" which as later popularised by the Brundtland Commission and the UN Conference in Rio.

Like its predecessor, *Caring for the Earth* starts with an ethical foundation. We have to respect and care for the community of life. On this basis it argues that change has to begin with each and every one of us, above all in our attitudes and our patterns of consumption.

Caring for the Earth recommends that the main decisions on use of nature and natural resources should be taken at the community level.

At national level, national conservation strategies are proposed in which, of course, "conservation" includes the idea of sustain-

able development. The NCS approach is based on the principle that environment and development issues are cross-sectoral, they are not just the preserve of one department of government.

At international level, *Caring for the Earth* insists we must create a global alliance. This does not mean another international organisation or superstructure, but rather an effective commitment to shared goals across a wide range of political and social groups. Only international commitment will safeguard the atmosphere and the seas. Only teamwork among nations will address the imbalance between rich and poor, seeking to eliminate human poverty and to respect human dignity while conserving the bounty of nature.

Parks for life

Protected areas encompass the most exciting, dramatic and inspiring landscapes, complete with the finest wildlife systems and some of the most enduring human cultures of Europe. Like parks, nature reserves and protected landscapes everywhere, they face an uncertain future. Yet in many ways Europe is fortunate compared to other parts of our stressed world. It enjoys a generally stable human population, relative prosperity, surplus agricultural capacity, a new climate of co-operation among nations, and an increasingly concerned public - all of which create of climate of opportunity for protected areas in Europe.

Parks for life; action for protected areas in Europe is a response to this opportunity. It is also a response to the call of the World Parks Congress in Caracas in 1992 for regional plans to link global aims to national and local action.

This plan addresses Europe's protected area needs. But many of the key themes - community involvement, the need to plan and manage protected areas in their wider context, and the importance of seizing opportunities as well as responding to threats - are relevant everywhere. So is the collaborative process by which the plan was prepared. Through CNPPA and the wider IUCN membership, IUCN will adapt and help apply the lessons learned in regional plans for protected areas in other parts of the world - as well as working to implement this plan. ■

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European Conservation Strategy

Hector Hacourt

It was in June 1987, at the 5th European Ministerial Conference on the Environment, that the idea of a European Conservation Strategy took shape; it was accepted three years later by the 6th Ministerial Conference and formed the subject of Recommendation No. R ENV (90) 1 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Why such a Strategy?

When the idea of a Strategy was put forward, it was the year 1987, long before the World Conference in Rio de Janeiro, and thus long before work started on the World Convention on Biological Diversity. At that time the ministers for the environment had already recognised that humanity's impact on the environment was steadily growing, thereby endangering the survival of an ever-increasing number of wild plant and animal species and their habitats. They also recognised that environmental policies should be incorporated into all sectoral policies, including economic, social, cultural, educational, agricultural and forestry policies.

Wishing to provide present and future generations of Europeans with a healthy and harmonious environment in which they would be able to achieve self-fulfilment, the ministers for the environment were aware of the need to fix priority objectives to be implemented in national, regional and local policies for the spatial planning and management of the environment. This led to the European Conservation Strategy.

The Strategy's objectives

Our culture should respect the natural environment not only for the profits that can be drawn from it but quite simply for what it is. Human beings should accept co-existence with nature rather than want to subjugate it to immediate needs.

Though it is perfectly natural and legitimate to meet the needs and aspirations of each individual, this should always be done with the objective of a rational and sustainable use of natural resources and the maintenance of a healthy environment. This makes it necessary to suggest how a sustainable development that is respectful of natural

resources and assets can be achieved and incorporated into all the policies that govern our society.

Lastly, it is essential for each one of us to be fully involved in the future development of our society in harmony with the natural environment. For this purpose, people need to be made aware of environmental problems and made to feel responsible for their solution.

It thus became necessary to spell these objectives out - and that is what the authors of the Strategy have tried to do.

The Strategy's content

The Strategy is in two parts, one devoted to general elements and the other to sectoral aspects.

General elements

Starting from the principle that it is the responsibility of governments to draw up national strategies, the Strategy attaches great importance to the roles governments should play, particularly in the development and implementation of policies to safeguard the quality of life, to sustain socio-economic well-being and to manage natural resources in an economically and ecologically effective manner. In listing a series of tasks to be performed by governments, the Strategy does not overlook the non-sectoral approach and international co-operation since no problem can be resolved in isolation or by a single state.

At the same time the Strategy reminds us that preventive measures are more effective and often less costly: "prevention is better than cure". Preference should therefore be given to "remedial and reactive strategies [rather than] to preventive and active strategies". But this should not prevent damage done from being repaired.

Lastly the Strategy mentions a number of principles relating to flexible policies which avoid a static concept of the environment; to the effective regulatory mechanisms that are needed; to the definition of environmental objectives that should condition all spatial planning; and to public awareness and participation and the satisfaction of people's cultural, aesthetic and spiritual needs.

It is therefore right and proper for all these aspects to be present in all sectors of a nation's policy.

Sectoral aspects

The Strategy states that "the natural environment is in a state of complex, delicate equilibrium which must not be disrupted; it follows that there are thresholds which must not be exceeded in order to avoid endangering this equilibrium".

In this second part, the Strategy lists a number of actions to be undertaken in fifteen sectors that determine our environment: the air; inland waters, lakes and rivers; seas; soil; wildlife and biotopes; landscapes, biotechnology and agriculture; forestry; recreation and tourism; urban and industrial areas; rural areas; waste and dangerous substances; energy; and transport.

It would be tedious to mention all the actions recommended, but it is encouraging to consider them and see to what extent they have been taken up in subsequent documents. This fact alone could justify the very existence of the European Conservation Strategy.

Conclusion

It must be recognised that this Council of Europe Strategy, though devised somewhat earlier, has been overshadowed by the World Convention on Biological Diversity adopted at the Rio de Janeiro Conference in 1992 and by the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy adopted by the Sofia Conference in 1995.

The European Conservation Strategy, however, has had the merit of drawing the attention of those responsible at all levels to the real problems of our society, which must do its utmost to safeguard its riches and natural resources. ■

Ir. H. Hacourt
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The Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy

Frits C. Prillewitz

One can look at Europe in many different ways. From a socio-economic point of view, the group of countries working very closely together in the European Union is strong, although there are differences in that respect between the countries of the EU. Looking at Europe from a biodiversity point of view, the south and the east of the old continent are much more interesting than the western and the northern part of it. The EU has since a couple of years financial mechanisms to support the weaker countries (and regions) in its area in their economic developments. Only very recently, the European Commission indicated that for its so-called cohesion policy (the use of the structural funds, the Cohesion Fund) "the horizontal character of the environmental dimension", according to what was stated in

the Maastricht Treaty, will be taken more seriously into account, as well as "the diversity of situations in the various regions of the Community" (communications from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, November 1995).

For the central and eastern European countries (CEEC) the EU has developed different programmes (Phare, Tacis), mainly for support to the economies of these countries in transition. Also programmes have been started up in favour of the environment, but up till now almost totally for the grey environment and not for the green one. This applies also to the activities of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Investment Bank (EIB), as well as the World Bank. It looks like that we are

going to make the same mistakes as the countries of the West did in the past (or regretably are still doing in many cases) namely always giving priority to economic development and not integrating nature into the other sectors. This is a pity because the eastern part of Europe is very rich in biodiversity, there are still big untouched nature reserves and semi-natural areas with traditional (low input) farming do still exist on a large scale. How to keep a major part of this natural richness in place? Given the obligations of all the countries of Europe, according to the Convention on Biodiversity, signed by all these countries (and ratified by most of them) to safeguard Europe's biodiversity, co-operation between the countries is a prerequisite. And waiting till more countries have joined the EU is dangerous. That was understood already a couple of years ago, and through the activities of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (in collaboration with others with responsibilities in this respect for the whole of Europe, such as the Council of Europe and UNEP) a process was started which was called "Environment for Europe" and this received the support of all the European ministers of the environment.

Europe has vast semi-natural areas used for extensive farming



Saxifraga Foundation

These ministers have already met three times (Dobřiš, Lucerne, Sofia) in the last six years and they decided in that period upon different environmental programmes and action plans. After the United Nations's Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1995) it was realised that in the framework of the "Environment for Europe" process, common activities in favour of Europe's natural biodiversity could be developed. At Lucerne it was decided that with that purpose, and under the auspices of the Council of Europe, a Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy would be drafted and presented to the ministerial conference in Sofia at the end of 1995 for endorsement.

It is a non-binding instrument with a special character: it takes the common obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity as a starting point and considers the various differences in Europe as a basis for integrated actions, while through and during implementation, international solidarity and responsible sponsorship will be reflected. Furthermore, it could be used for expressing priorities for nature conservation in the whole of Europe and for combining different instruments and funds, not leading to new bureaucracies.

The Strategy's content

Improving the overall interaction between man and the environment is the key idea behind the Strategy. Protecting individual reserves and species alone does not provide long-term conservation and sustainability of nature.

The Strategy actively involves the economic sectors of agriculture, energy, industry, tourism, fisheries, forestry and transport in conserving and restoring nature, arguing that the decline in Europe's natural environment was caused by social and economic action and therefore can only be reversed when these sectors are fully involved in conservation policy and practice.



Terraces, which are cultural and rural landscapes, should be conserved

The Strategy will promote local and regional activities to raise the level of public awareness and public participation in conserving Europe's natural heritage. For the first time, the protection of traditional man-made landscapes that give the regions of Europe their specific character gets as much attention as the protection of the habitats and species.

The Strategy covers the next twenty years, (1996-2016), but will be implemented in four five-year Action Plans. Each Action Plan will address the issues that are considered most important for that period. Maximum use is made of unique opportunities being offered by the current social, political and economic developments in Europe. The Action Plan structure allows the Strategy to respond to

future developments and make optimal use of opportunities.

The first Action Plan (1996-2000) identifies eleven key action themes. They focus on promoting conservation and sustainable economic use of the natural environment. The Action Plan specifically addresses agriculture and rural economy, as this sector most directly interacts with biological and landscape diversity. Furthermore, agricultural policy and practice is currently undergoing change which offers opportunities for action. Other key issues are :

- developing national ecological networks and realising a pan-European ecological network in ten years;

- raising public awareness and public participation in conservation;
- promoting the conservation of typical traditional cultural and rural landscapes.

The priority actions identified in the Action Plan 1996-2000 can be incorporated into existing work programmes of international organisations, government authorities, commercial companies or NGOs. Action Plan projects can therefore be undertaken by these organisations as individual activities under existing budgets, and still contribute towards the realisation of the Action Plan 1996-2000.

In conclusion: in many ways the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy is innovative. The Strategy introduces common objectives for national

and regional activities throughout Europe. The Strategy will however not introduce new legislation or bureaucracy, and it will not require major additional funding. Existing conventions, programmes and funds will be used to their full potential. These common objectives will provide a framework for a consistent response to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Follow-up to the Sofia Declaration

In Sofia the Ministers welcomed "the readiness of the Council of Europe and UNEP, in co-operation with OECD and IUCN, to establish a Task Force or other appropriate mechanism in order to guide and co-ordinate the implementation and the further development of the Strategy. In this respect we request the widest possible consultation and collaboration in order to achieve its objectives with a view to reporting on progress at the next conference". The next conference will take place in Copenhagen in spring 1998.

At this moment discussions take place to give shape to the most suitable form for the Task Force and its Secretariat. However, a breakthrough is necessary, and in such a way that on the one hand the competences of the different institutions, working in this field, do not form stumbling blocks but on the contrary, they will be used in a flexible way and thus be used above their full potentials. On the other hand, the involvement of all relevant partners should not lead to unworkable situations (big meetings, high travel costs, complicated secretariat etc).

Happily enough, many ongoing activities can be related already to the implementation of the Strategy. For the European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC), which was heavily involved in the drafting of the Strategy, reason to start an inventory about all available funds (EU funds, banks, charities, lotteries, bilateral donors etc.) which could be linked to the promotion of biodiversity. In June this year ECNC will organise on the basis of the material gathered, and with the help of experts, a two-day working conference about "innovative financing opportunities for European biodiversity", in order to show that implementation of the Strategy is really feasible. ■

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Y. Noto - Campanella

European Water Charter

Georges Tendron

In January 1963, the Council of Europe's Consultative Assembly instructed its Cultural and Scientific Committee to examine the problems caused by fresh water pollution in Europe. It also asked the Committee on Agriculture for an opinion and the Social Committee to take part in the examination of these problems within a joint working party on fresh water pollution control. On 1 October 1965, following the presentation of the working party's report by Mr Georges Housiaux, Belgian senator and chairman of the working party, the Consultative Assembly unanimously adopted Recommendation 436 urging member governments of the Council of Europe to implement joint action to control fresh water pollution.

Pollution control

The recommendation contained "Guiding principles on fresh water pollution control" and, in an appendix, an "Outline of a water charter". In line with the proposals contained in Recommendation 436, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers instructed the Committee of Experts for the Conservation of Nature and Landscape to prepare a draft water charter. The charter was proclaimed in Strasbourg on 6 May 1968.

Why have a water charter?

Initially, the Consultative Assembly intended to provoke a tide of opinion which would

promote general awareness of the problem of water pollution and, in the process, facilitate the implementation of national legislation which was being adopted in the member states. The extensive propaganda campaign the Consultative Assembly had in mind should, as far as possible, publicise the essential facts and fundamental principles necessary for the quantitative and qualitative protection of water resources. A formal text in the form of a charter which was easy to understand and remember was, as confirmed by public relations experts, a good way of instilling the basic understanding that each citizen must have of an element as vital as water.

Design and aims

The Water Charter was planned and designed in such a way as to cover a number of fundamental aspects, which would make it possible to develop a genuine water policy. These aspects include concepts representing the spirit and philosophy of the charter, they include research into and information about water which apply these concepts in practice, and they include courses of action which are the logical conclusion. In that sense, the charter remains highly pragmatic and realistic.

Article I is irrefutable. "There is no life without water" is clearly a fundamental principle underlying all the other articles of the charter. It influences the essential drive for existence and survival of all living things, and human beings in particular. But in addition to this biological and physiological drive there is an economic concept, one of aspiration to well-

being through the interdependence of human activity and water. "It is a treasure indispensable to all human activity" (Article I).

Jurisprudence relating to water dates back to the dawn of time. More recently, Roman law considered water to be common property (*res communis*). Its vital importance for man makes it an inalienable asset to be handed down to future generations, which the charter expresses, according to a legally universal concept, by conferring on water the status of a common heritage (Article X) and, in so doing, affording it an international dimension (Article XII).

It would have been risky to advocate implementing a coherent water policy without also recommending the acquisition and continued pursuit of knowledge through basic and applied research (Article IX). Ongoing and extensive research is necessary in order to appraise and evaluate water quality and quantity so that the curative, consolidation or preventive measures needed to minimise the impact of human activity can be adapted accordingly (Articles IV, V, VI and VII).

Against a background of demographic explosion and considerably increased demand, with a better understanding of cause and effect and of the various mechanisms involved in changes to the state of water resources, it is now possible to control resources and co-ordinate management (Articles VIII and XI). Article IX of the charter therefore regards the need for water specialists and technologists as a priority.

Its design and its strategy for action instilling a responsible attitude in all water consumers and users has made the Water Charter suitable for all levels of public information for the purpose of guiding, supporting and accompanying any national or international political effort to protect a vital aspect of our natural heritage.

Twenty-eight years after it was proclaimed, the Council of Europe's Water Charter remains just as relevant and important. It has helped considerably, through the information campaigns organised in all the member countries, to improve understanding of the problems posed by the need for water conservation. Although much remains to be done in this complex field where individual interests are sometimes deeply rooted, the charter has nevertheless succeeded in awakening a sense of responsibility where water is concerned and, although not an end in itself, it has been a milestone in the consideration of the fundamental laws of nature. ■

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European Soil Charter

Winfried E. H. Blum

Soil: a complex environment

Soil is a most complex constituent of natural environments, because it consists of inorganic and organic solids, liquids and gaseous materials and contains by far more living organisms and more organic carbon than the above-ground biomass. In contrast to air and water, which are diffusive media with high to medium turnover rates (even lakes and ground water), soils are much more stable and differ considerably on a small-scale basis. They are therefore much more vulnerable and cannot be replaced when irreversibly damaged.

Enlarged definition

The European Soil Charter, adopted in 1972, developed in twelve chapters a concept for the protection of soil and its sustainable use. Its main targets are still valid, even taking into consideration that the definition of soil as a part of the environment has been enlarged (6th European Ministerial Conference on the Environment in Brussels, 11-12 October 1990, document MEN 6 (90) 2) including also porous sediments and other permeable rock parent material, together with the water which these contain and the

reserves of underground water. Moreover, new important soil functions were defined, such as the filter, buffer and transformation capacity of soil as a protective medium for the ground water, the food chain and the atmosphere and the importance of soil as a gene reserve.

Identification of threats

In the meantime, many more causes of pressure than agriculture and forestry have been identified and the focus of protection has been enlarged, eg including industrial pollution and acidification processes as well as soil losses through sealing. This means also that many further sources of soil contamination, pollution or destruction have to be considered, thus distinguishing for example between "polluted soils" as a definition for broad-scale soil contamination, pollution or degradation and "polluted sites", focusing mainly on adverse landfills, waste deposits and other forms of concentrated and deep-reaching pollution.

Moreover, for strategic, tactical and operational reasons, "reversible" and "irreversible" hazards were distinguished. Whereas reversible impacts can be remedied by nature ("soil resilience") or by human interference such as in the case of soil compaction or surface crusting and similar phenomena, soil

sealing by infrastructure development, erosion, intensive pollution by heavy metals, advanced acidification, salinisation or alcalinisation and similar impacts cannot be healed even by intensive human interference.

Insufficient follow-up

Even so, the valuable proposals already made in 1972 in Chapters 9, 10 and 11 of the European Soil Charter have not been sufficiently followed by many of the European member States that have adapted the Soil Charter at national level. A European inventory of soil resources is not yet established, soil research is still very limited and needs to be considerably furthered, and soil conservation and protection should be taught at many more levels than is done actually and should be brought to public awareness, which is still quite underdeveloped.

Progress

Some progress has been made, eg by the Council of Europe through the elaboration of a comprehensive insight into the actual state of European soils, entitled "The European soil resources" (Nature and Environment, No. 71, Council of Europe Press, 1995). Moreover, the Dobříš Assessment on "Europe's environment", published by the recently founded European Environment Agency (EEA) in Copenhagen in 1995, is another important step forward in soil protection and sustainable land use, as well as the foundation of the EEA itself in 1994.

Due to these and other interactions, European governments are getting increasingly concerned about soil deterioration and are therefore willing to promote soil protection and sustainable land use by technical and legislative actions at different levels.

Need for updating

Concluding, it can be stated that the European Soil Charter of 1972 was and is still a basic document which deserves to be considered. An updating to the actual level of knowledge would be desirable and could be the basis for further concerted actions on a European level for the protection of soils and their sustainable use. ■

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Infrastructure development also plays a part in the irreversible destruction of soil



Fríess-Irrmann



Fries-Irmann

Local authorities need to improve urban life

European Urban Charter

Richard Hartley

At the end of 1994, in Glasgow, the former EU Commissioner, Bruce Millan, on the occasion of a launching of a European Union initiative on urban regeneration, affirmed that "urban policies in Europe are best tackled at a local level".

This belief is also firmly shared by the Council of Europe. Municipalities and cities in Europe have the direct responsibilities for the improvement of the lives of their citizens. They succeed, or not, depending upon the political commitment of their local leaders and the involvement of their communities in the decisions affecting everyday life. That is why the European Urban Charter has been conceived and developed within the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE).

One or two considerations about the philosophy and objectives of the Congress would give a clearer picture as to the place and role of the European Urban Charter within its work as a whole.

Principal objectives

The Congress has two principal objectives. The first is to protect local democracy where it is weak and help create it where it has not existed, for example in central and eastern Europe over the last fifty years. Democracy is fragile unless it is secured at its roots, in the villages and town squares of Europe. This role draws its inspiration and strength from a text which has been used considerably as a model for the local government reform in the new democracies in Europe - the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

The Charter defines the principles behind local self-government, fiscal independence and the distribution of responsibility and power between the different levels of territorial administration. This belief in local autonomy, in subsidiarity and in participation is a theme which runs through the work of the CLRAE on urban policies and influences the spirit of the European Urban Charter.

A second principal objective of the Congress is co-operation, direct co-operation between municipalities and regions in its member countries - a delicate question. Where does national foreign policy begin and end? Where do the legitimate aspirations of local authorities to co-operate begin and end? Despite such questions, the Congress has a tradition of direct co-operation between regions with similar problems or within a given geographical zone, eg mountain regions, Mediterranean regions, Baltic regions - there are other examples.

Co-operation, solidarity

This political reality of co-operation also influences the spirit of the European Urban Charter - based on partnership, solidarity and a willingness and commitment to share experience on common problems and achieve, where possible, a common approach.

The protection of human rights, the respect of law and the emphasis on human dignity and values are the privileged domain of the Council of Europe and its component parts. It follows, therefore, that the work on urban policies of the Council of Europe has concentrated upon qualitative rather than quantitative aspects - on urban environmental protection; on the protection of minorities; on deal-

ing with social exclusion; on the improvement of architectural quality; on preventive policies for reducing crime; on promoting local policies for reducing drug abuse; on participation and community development; on the regeneration of industrial areas via social, cultural and environmental policies. In other words, a programme which helps to define and secure human rights in the built environment. Such are the principal elements in the doctrine of the Charter: a local focus, a democratic commitment, a willingness to co-operate and a focus on the human dimension of urban development.

Why such a Charter?

City life encompasses nearly every type of human activity. Pollution, environmental protection, preoccupation about employment, economic development, the respect of ethnic and religious differences, are all questions which have their most visible and acute symptoms and effects, positive or negative, in the city. A Charter and an attempt to identify principles and programmes in such a central debate was thus, a necessity.

It results from over ten years' work on urban questions at the Council of Europe - work which has concentrated on some of the aspects already mentioned. After ten years of conferences, seminars, projects of all sorts, on such subjects, the time was ripe to bring the essence of this work into one single text: we felt, furthermore, that there was value in working out a preliminary Declaration of Urban Rights. This 20-point Urban Declaration is an integral part of the Charter.

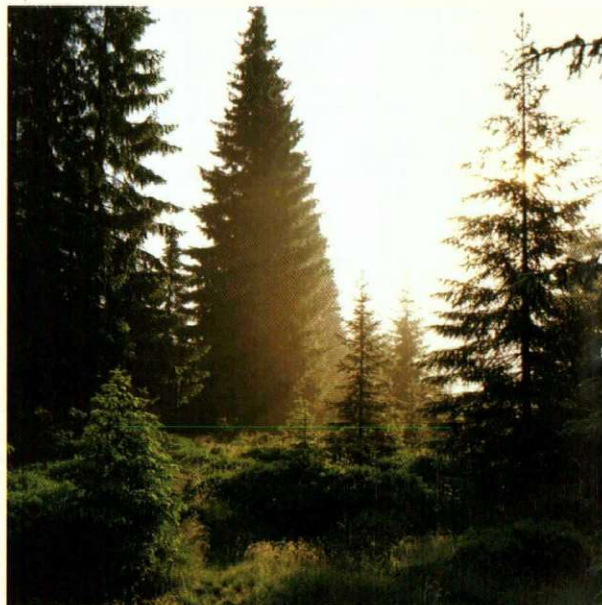
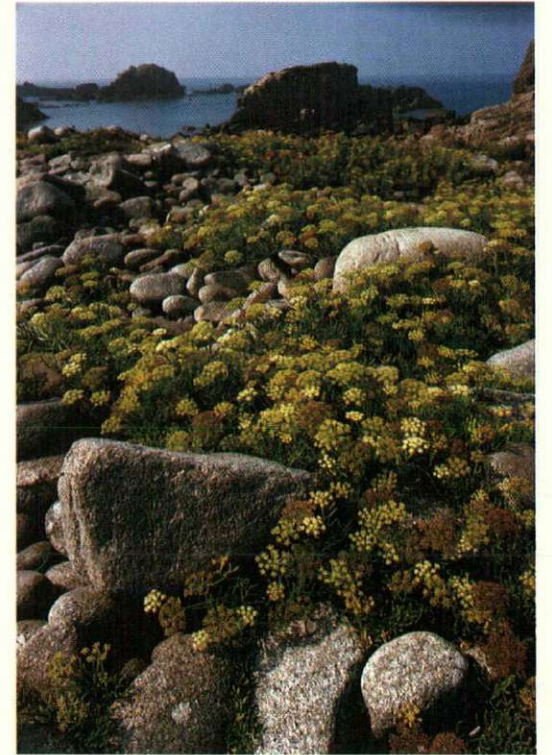
Guide, vehicle

It is not only a distillation of work, but also a guide by local authorities for local authorities on good urban practice. It is a vehicle which the CLRAE feels can help improve life in cities. However, the Charter does not have any binding force. The differences in urban development in Europe are such that there would be no justification or political future in trying to achieve some sort of international binding instrument, convention for example.

Rather, the Charter has been sent to towns in Europe, asking them to adhere to its principles. The results of this operation are awaited with interest and it is in the light of the reaction of cities to the Charter where the future work on urban policies of the CLRAE will be defined. ■

R. Hartley

Responsible for the Secretariat of the Chamber of Local Authorities Secretariat of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe Council of Europe

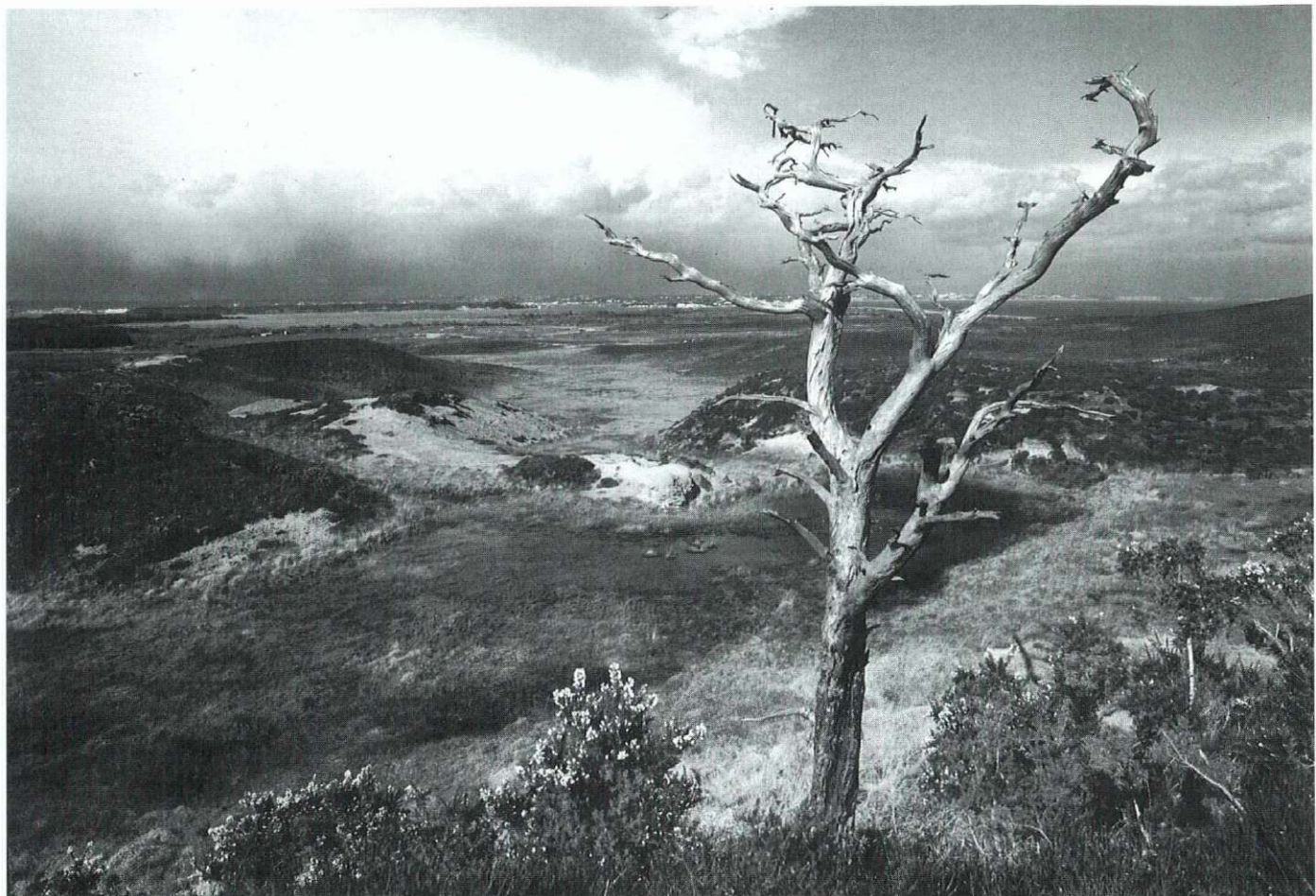


The most recent strategy is the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, approved by the Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe", Sofia, 25 October 1995.

It presents an innovative and proactive approach.

Innovative, because it addresses all biological and landscape initiatives under one European approach.

Proactive, because it promotes the integration of biological and landscape diversity considerations into social and economic sectors.



Dorset Moors, United Kingdom

The UK'S Biodiversity Strategy

Roger Bendall

Although in global terms the United Kingdom does not have a large number of terrestrial and freshwater species, nevertheless it has a rich and characteristic flora and fauna for a group of islands of its size. However, the number and range of plant and animal species in the UK has suffered many losses in the last fifty years as a result of urbanisation, agricultural and industrial development, an expanding transport network, pollution of air, water and soil and mineral extraction. Over 100 species are thought to have become extinct in the UK this century. These include 7% of our dragonflies, 5% of our butterflies and more than 2% of our fish and mammals.

It was in response to widespread concern about the need to do something to stop the loss of plants and animals and their habitats that our Prime Minister signed the Biodiversity Convention at the Earth Summit in Rio. In early 1994, the United Kingdom was one of the first countries to publish a strategy and action plan for conserving biodiversity. Since then we have carried out pio-

neering work in developing costed targets for key species and habitats.

The UK Action Plan sets as an overall goal:

- To conserve and enhance biological diversity within the UK, and to contribute to the conservation of global biodiversity through all appropriate mechanisms.

This goal fits in well with important international conservation conventions and directives such as Bern, Bonn, Ramsar, the Habitats and Species Directive as well as the Biodiversity Convention.

The UK Steering Group Report

The 1994 Action Plan provides an overall strategy, but it was recognised that more detailed work was needed particularly on targets. A Steering Group was set up which was tasked with:

- developing costed targets for key species and habitats;

- suggesting ways of improving the accessibility and co-ordination of information on biodiversity;

- recommending ways of increasing public awareness and involvement in conserving biodiversity; and

- recommending ways of ensuring that commitments in the Plan were properly monitored and carried out.

The work of the Steering Group, which was to advise the UK Government, was a truly collaborative effort and benefited from the wide background of its membership. This included academics, nature conservation agencies, the collections, business, farming and land management, voluntary conservation bodies and local and central government.

The Steering Group published its report on 13 December 1995. The report includes recommendations for a programme to improve biological recording and monitoring in the UK, and a programme to improve public awareness and involvement. A separate volume of the report contains conservation

action plans and targets for 116 key species and 14 habitats. During the next three years a further 286 species plans and 24 habitat plans will be prepared. These targets and programmes will form the basis for nature conservation in the UK into the next century.

Targets

There is not space in this article to describe all the proposals in the report. For example, there are over eighty proposals to increase public awareness and involvement through government stimulated action, local action, the dissemination of advice and guidance through key sectors and education and training.

However, readers may be interested in the approach which was taken in setting targets for selected species and habitats. The first stage was to identify criteria for selecting key species. It was recognised that information on many marine species, lower plants and invertebrates was sparse and selection was based on the best information available. It was agreed that species which qualified for one or more of the following categories should be considered:-

- threatened endemic and other globally threatened species;
- species where the UK has more than 25% of the world or appropriate biogeographical populations;
- species where numbers or range have declined by more than 25% in the last 25 years;
- in some instances where the species are found in fewer than fifteen ten-kilometre-squares in the UK; and
- species which are listed in relevant conventions, directives or legislation.

Health of biodiversity

This approach produced a list of some 1 250 species which will be monitored to establish a review of the health of biodiversity in the UK.

About 400 species were then drawn from this long list to include those species which are either globally threatened or rapidly declining in the UK, ie by more than 50% in the last twenty-five years. 116 species action plans were prepared and published in the Steering Group Report, and action plans will be prepared for the remaining species within the next three years. A similar selection process was carried out for key habitats using the following criteria:-

- habitats for which the UK has international obligations;
- habitats at risk, such as those with a high rate of decline especially over the last twenty years, or which are rare;
- areas, particularly marine areas, which may be functionally critical; and
- areas important for key species.

Action plans

Action plans were prepared for fourteen key habitats - including lowland heathland, upland oakwood, cereal field margins and mesotrophic standing waters - and the intention is to prepare a further twenty-four habitat action plans within the next three years.

Both species and habitat action plans show the current status of the species or habitat; the main factors which have caused loss or decline; a brief note of what conservation action is currently under way; targets for maintaining or increasing populations and range (species) or size (habitats), and a list of actions which are needed to support the targets. Early drafts of the action plans were prepared by voluntary conservation experts under contract to the Department of the Environment. Further editing was undertaken by the nature conservation agencies.

Estimation of costs

Best endeavours were made to estimate the costs of the plans precisely, though it was acknowledged that in some cases it was not possible to do so with great precision. The checklist of action points, which was used as appropriate to cost each species plan, included:-

- surveys to determine distribution and population size;
- ecological research;
- genetic and population dynamics studies;
- *ex-situ* conservation (cultivation and captive breeding);
- seed bank creation and maintenance;
- re-introduction and translocation;
- special habitat management and restoration;
- habitat creation;
- any special new land management scheme that may be needed;
- control of competitors and predators;
- wardening of sites;
- special water quality and quantity improvements;
- monitoring;
- advice to land managers; and
- public relations.

For habitat action plans, account was taken of:

- the costs of managing public sector land, and the costs of land management scheme payments to land managers (including administration);
- revenue from land management; and
- land purchase costs, both the costs of public sector acquisition and grants for private sector purchase.

The indicative costs are substantial. For the fourteen habitat plans, they are £12.9m for 1997 rising to £24.5m for 2000 and £37.2m by the year 2010. For species plans, they are £3.8m for 1997, £2.9m 2000 and £2.4m by the year 2010. The costs are additional to existing public expenditure commitments.

If national targets are to be implemented successfully, we require some means of ensuring that the actions needed at the national level are undertaken in an integrated manner, and that national targets are translated into effective action at a local level.

Local biodiversity action plans are seen as a means by which such actions can be achieved. Local plans should include targets which reflect the values of local people, and which are based on the range of local conditions and thereby cater for local distinctiveness. They also provide a mechanism for meeting national targets.

Conclusion

The Steering Group report has been well received. The initial response of conservation experts has been universally positive, and there has been widespread coverage and interest in the British media.

The targets and action plans will provide a focus for future conservation effort. Successful implementation of the plans will depend crucially on all sectors, private, public and voluntary, playing an active part. Existing and future programmes will need to be reviewed and re-prioritised.

The health of our biodiversity provides a litmus test for sustainable development. The work that needs to be done has been defined, the challenge is now to deliver the targets. ■

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English Nature

◀ The Large Blue (*Maculinea arion*) has been covered by an action plan



G. Baumgart

▼ Earthworms play a fundamental role in soil fertility

Charter on Invertebrates

The Charter on Invertebrates was adopted on 19 June 1986 by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Recommendation No. R (86) 10 invites governments of the member States to take account of this charter in their environmental management policies.

Importance of invertebrates

Invertebrates are rather poorly known although they make up the largest number of animal species both on land and in fresh and salt water.

There are more than 1 105 000 different scientifically-described species of invertebrates while vertebrates, which are much better known as they include mammals, birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians, are no more than 51 000 species.

In terms of weight (biomass), invertebrates are the largest animal complex living on dry land, amounting to as much as one tonne per hectare of soil, the number of ani-

mals running into hundreds of billions.

Qualitative importance

Many invertebrates are tremendously important for human nourishment and for industry and commercial activities in general, for example crustaceans, marine and terrestrial molluscs, and bees. Earthworms play a fundamental role in keeping the soil fertile.

All arthropoda are essential for the formation of humus and for recycling organic matter. They are also very important for research in both science (for example genetics, pharmacology, etc.) and medicine as a source of medicinal preparations (for example pederin).

The fertility of 80% of the plants cultivated by man is ensured by pollen-bearing insects without which we would have no textile fibres, medicines or foodstuffs. It is also a well-established fact that 98% of the insect species which damage plants are kept under

control by other insects and arthropoda which thus act as a natural living form of protection for plants and maintain a permanent, costless and non-polluting ecological equilibrium.

“Cultural revolution”

With its new ideas and practical implications, the Charter on Invertebrates is a truly unexpected “cultural revolution” and once more puts the Council of Europe in the forefront of the fight to preserve nature and improve the quality of life. ■

Extract from :

“A European Cultural Revolution: the Council of Europe’s Charter on Invertebrates”

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Towards a European Charter on the Danube Basin

Antonella Cagnolati - Staveris

As early as the 1960s, the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly was aware of the importance of protecting and rationally managing our environment, both natural and built, and of ensuring that any action to this end was part of an overall policy for development, which today we call balanced (or sustainable) development.

Helping the Danube region

Since 1989 and the geo-political upheavals in Europe, the Council of Europe has found itself with a new role vis-à-vis the countries of central and eastern Europe, which consists primarily of assisting them in the transition from a collectivist, totalitarian system to a democratic one based on a market economy.

It is important to help these countries restore their natural resources and put in place an environment policy which, while aimed at sustainable development and the conservation of resources, does not compromise the economic and social growth which they are entitled to expect.

This means implementing an integrated policy which meets the specific needs of the region (or regions) and at the same time fits into a pan-European political framework.

The Danube Basin is a region characterised not only by the oro-geographic unity inherent to the river basin and the river itself, but also by a historic, cultural and economic past shared by the Danube countries and regions.

The geo-political changes of 1989 therefore opened up new horizons for the Danube Basin, which has the potential to become a genuine platform for development in the heart of central and eastern Europe.

For example, the upgrading of the Rhine-Main-Danube link to a large capacity navigation route could promote economic or tourist growth in the region and it should not be forgotten that the Danube Basin constitutes an outstanding heritage in terms of natural resources, if only for its delta.

Noting that there are many initiatives resulting from multilateral and bilateral co-operation covering the various aspects of Danube Basin management, and believing that for the sustainable development of the region and of greater Europe as a whole it is important to exploit fully the efforts being made on all sides to ensure the harmonious development of the Basin, the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly has thought it advisable to make the most of existing means and ensure coherence among them by organising a platform for dialogue on which the various

players in these different types of co-operation can work together.

Charter

For this purpose, the Assembly adopted the proposal made by one of its members, Mr Zierer (Germany, PPE), on behalf of the Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities, to draw up a Danube Basin Charter.

The purpose of this Charter is not to replace any one - and certainly not all - of the existing instruments or initiatives, but to provide a platform for necessary dialogue and consultation and the institutional framework to ensure harmonious development in the region.

In addition, the Charter should not only ensure coherence among the various conventions, agreements or projects concerning the Danube, but should also bring together the institutional and non-institutional partners involved - representatives of governments, local and regional authorities and NGOs and the elected representatives of national parliaments and, where they exist, regional parliaments - so that they can work together to devise complementary consultation and co-operation strategies.

In order to fulfil the task assigned to it by the Assembly, the Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities, organised a preliminary consultation of the main players at a "Forum" held in Paris in December 1994. A new draft text

of the Charter, revised in the light of the conclusions of this forum, was widely distributed among national and regional parliaments, local and regional authorities of Danube Basin countries, representatives of the various legislative instruments and initiatives, and NGOs working in the region, with a view to a further consultation, the results of which have already been reviewed at an evaluation meeting.

A final meeting to include all the main parties involved will be held in Romania, probably in mid-May 1996. The Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities will discuss the preliminary draft which, once it has been adopted, will be forwarded to the Parliamentary Assembly, probably in October 1996, for adoption and transmission to the Committee of Ministers.

In its recommendations to the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly could express the hope that the draft will be submitted to the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning which will hold its 11th session in Cyprus in autumn 1997 on the theme of the management of water resources.

A. Cagnolati - Staveris
Secretary of the Parliamentary
Assembly's Committee on the Environment,
Regional Planning and Local Authorities
Council of Europe

The Danube Basin represents an incredible heritage in terms of natural resources



D. Robert/Association Danube Vert



The landscape is shaped by nature and other features

Draft European Landscape Convention

Riccardo Priore

The landscape is the visual dimension of our environment and it exists only through human sensitivity, through the imagination of women and men; it is based on their work with pre-existent nature.

The landscape is to the environment what our skin is to our bodies, a surface which reflects the state of health of a living organism. If the landscape is ailing, the cause must be found in society's relationship with its environment. To restore a damaged landscape signifies understanding and totally respecting this relationship. If the landscape is to continue to contribute to our physical and spiritual well-being and to remain a fundamental aspect of our identity, the development of our societies will have to become increasingly sustainable.

In the past we did not talk about the landscape. Today we pay greater attention to it: a reflection, perhaps, of the changes which have been inflicted on it, a sign that frequently the landscape no longer manages to fulfil the function society expects of it.

Urgent action

In order to avoid this, urgent action is necessary at all levels. In many countries, steps have already been taken by public authorities

(at local, regional and national level) and private bodies; and at international level, governmental and non-governmental organisations have taken far-reaching action. However, all these initiatives are often limited geographically, address the landscape problem only partially or deal with other aspects of spatial management and protection.

This means, from a strictly legal point of view, that at least for the moment there is no specific, comprehensive instrument devoted entirely to the landscape on a European scale, and to its protection, management and enhancement.

Draft convention

To fill this gap and in response to growing social and institutional demand, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE), the Council of Europe body representing area-based authorities, has decided to draw up a draft European Landscape Convention.

The Congress will submit the draft convention, once it has been prepared by the working group set up for this purpose, to the Committee of Ministers for final adoption and, possibly, opening for signature.

The CLRAE working group on the European Landscape Convention (ELC), aware of its

responsibility, determined from the outset in November 1994 the principles which would govern its action.

A consolidating project

The ELC group is convinced that the protection and management of European landscapes helps to shape and consolidate Europe's cultural identity, which is one of the Council of Europe's fundamental aims.

In this context, the landscape is a complex theme, with both cultural and natural aspects, which must, in a spirit of democratic participation, take account of the interests and demands of a great many players. For this reason, the ELC group's working methods are based on interdisciplinarity, co-ordination and participation.

The draft European Landscape Convention has been designed as a highly flexible legal instrument: the wide range of interests involved and the many different kinds of action which different types of landscape require make maximum flexibility essential.

Taking account of diversity

This approach takes account of landscapes which, depending on their specific character-

istics. need measures ranging from the strictest conservation, through protection, preservation and management to actual creation.

In order to achieve this goal, the ELC group wishes to avoid the conceptual, legal and functional separation of interests relating to natural landscapes from those relating to cultural ones. The landscape denotes the human perception of a territory whose appearance has been shaped by both natural and cultural factors; wholly untouched areas are very rare, and even they have an essential cultural component - the human eye and the human imagination.

International legal instrument

The decision of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe to prepare a draft European Landscape Convention is based on the belief that solving European landscape problems means having a binding legal instrument which covers all European

landscapes. To this end, the draft European Landscape Convention will take account of other work done on natural or cultural landscape by the Council of Europe and other international institutions, at local, national and international levels.

Given the requirements of democracy and the special nature, polyvalency and variety of the landscape interests and values that have to be taken into account, the European experts invited to the first hearing organised by the ELC group in November 1995 for the purpose of presenting a preliminary draft of the convention and hearing observations, welcomed the fact that it had been possible for a European Landscape Convention to be planned and prepared, within the Council of Europe, by a body working very closely with citizens, such as the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe.

If the convention comes into force, it will, as a legally binding instrument, serve as a general legal reference framework for European countries which, after ratifying it, will want

to introduce legislation and administrative regulations consonant with European standards and recognising the true importance of the landscape.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe believes it was time to respond to European people's changing attitude to all the qualities and aspects of their environment.

The landscape is one such aspect, perhaps the most delicate and undoubtedly the most complex, which is able, for that very reason, to help satisfy one of the most deep-rooted and elusive needs of human beings. ■

R. Priore

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of the Congress of Local
and Regional Authorities of Europe
Council of Europe

UN-ECE's environmental co-operation

Kaj Bärlund

ECE wants to set environmental priorities for region-wide co-operation and concentrate on the environmental activities where it has a competitive advantage.

ECE Regional Strategy

The view of ECE that the protection of the environment and rational management of natural resources are an integral part of economic and social development over both the short and long-term is not a new one.

Already in 1988, ECE member countries, adopted a Regional Strategy for Environmental Protection and Rational Use of Natural Resources based on environmental priorities specific to the ECE region. The concept of this comprehensive, integrated regional strategy was first advanced in 1983 within the framework of the Senior Advisers to ECE Governments on Environmental Problems.

Through the study of the specific economic and social features of the regions, ECE sought to identify the environmental problems and trends and to establish clear, meaningful goals to stimulate and guide actions by member governments.

Medium-term goals were: the improvement of air quality; rational use of water and improvement of water quality; pollution abatement in the seas and near-shore marine environments of the ECE region; soil protection; rational use of the land; the improvement of forestry management practices, the protection of wildlife and the protection and improvement of genetic resources; efficient management of wastes and toxic and hazardous chemicals, the improvement of environmental management.

To achieve these goals, policy and programmes were set out as well as the necessary conditions for the implementation of the strategy. These conditions concerned legislation, scientific progress, integration of environmental, economic and social policies, public participation and international co-operation.

Region-wide co-operation

ECE is open to work-sharing and welcomes good co-operation with other major players in the ECE region (Europe, North America, the Central Asian republics and Israel).

We strongly emphasise the crucial need for a region-wide cooperation on an equal footing. Only if all governments are represented as

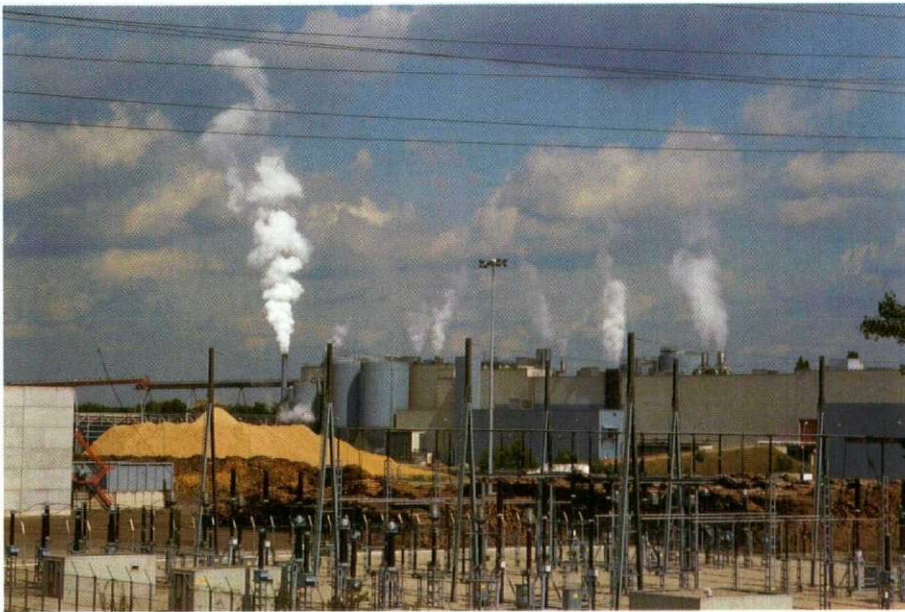
equals can there be real co-operation to meet the region's environmental challenges.

The concept of sustainable development is useful to determine the goals of future environment-related activities in the region. Economic growth is desirable, but it has to be achieved without causing damage to human health, the environment and the natural resource base, including biodiversity.

Present process

The "Environment for Europe" ministerial process has gathered all the major institutions and organisations in a region-wide co-operative framework. This has enabled governments to increase cost-effectiveness and reduce over-lapping work within different fora. As the main co-ordinating organisation, ECE will continue to have an important role in overseeing the work and contributing to its efficiency as well as in preparing key elements of the substantive input.

International environmental legislation provides a good tool to reduce environmental problems and increase co-operation and convergence in the region. The conventions and protocols negotiated under the auspices of ECE include measures for the concerted reduction of pollution burden, but also constitute a useful basis for co-operation on tech-



F. Roubert

Co-operation here is designed to promote environmentally friendly technology

nology, monitoring and implementation as well as scientific activities. A number of new legal instruments will be required during the next few years, e.g. on air pollution abatement and public participation in environmental decision-making. At the same time increasing attention will be given to the prudent implementation of existing and new legal instruments.

Review work

The introduction of environmental performance reviews in the whole ECE region adds a new dimension to environmental co-operation. The substantive review work by outside experts and the concluding peer review by government representatives provides an in-depth tool to assess member countries' overall environmental performance, including their implementation of and adherence to international agreements. The process also promotes the integration of environmental considerations in all sectoral activities in member countries by including all sectors of environmental relevance in the review work. ECE has, in co-operation with OECD, carried out pilot reviews of Poland and Bulgaria. The main responsibility for these lay with OECD. ECE has also completed a pilot review of Estonia on its own and is about to embark on a review programme for all ECE member countries outside OECD.

The work to specifically reduce the huge environmental problems in many parts of central and eastern Europe has provided much useful experience and produced some significant, positive results. To date, however, much of the reduction of the pollution load is the result of the decrease in overall industrial output.

Necessary means

Clearly targeted and prioritised foreign financial assistance is still needed to ensure that environmental investments in transition countries take off. The real challenge is

ensuring sustainability in the economic recovery that is beginning to take place in most of these countries. Every effort must be made to introduce environmentally friendly technologies in this process.

Building up administrative capacities and expertise remains a key challenge. Only a consistent legal and administrative framework on a national level can ensure the success of the broad range of measures needed. The international environmental community as well as member countries on a bilateral level should continue to provide targeted and cost-effective workshops and other learning activities in order to build capacities that make transition countries self-sufficient in implementing environmental obligations.

The follow-up to the European state-of-the-environment exercise, carried out for the first time under the auspices of the European Environment Agency in the "Dobříš Assessment", is crucial for identifying the most pressing regional and environmental problems. Satisfactory resources for this work have to be provided. The most recent scientific findings on the development of the state-of-the-environment and the effects of environmental measures have to be made available to decision-makers in a comprehensive manner.

Huge task

The first Environmental Programme for Europe, as endorsed by Ministers in Sofia in October 1995, constitutes a huge task for ECE in terms of implementation and setting priorities for action. This exercise can be conducted properly only with the broad co-operation of other organisations. Again ECE provides a useful forum for discussions between government representatives on the setting of priorities.

Especially during the preparations for the Sofia Conference, ECE paved the way for a strong presence of major groups in the preparatory work. The experience proved

positive. We have to pursue this fruitful co-operation.

The ECE environmental activities can benefit greatly from cross-sectoral expertise of the United Nations. This is an extremely useful asset when dealing with issues related to sustainable development and environmental problems of a complex cross-sectoral nature, like transport and environment, energy and environment, health and environment.

During the last few years the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy, consisting of representatives of all fifty-five member countries, has established strict priorities for its activities, discontinuing a number of former activities. The discussion on the cost-effective use of limited resources goes on, but I do not believe that much more can be gained from traditional streamlining. Almost all of the "excessive fat" has been taken away by the "work-out-sessions". Possible further cuts would undermine really vital activities. Indeed, to carry out the programme for environmental performance reviews we badly need additional extra-budgetary resources. ■

K. Bärlund

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European Community Environment Policy - at a turning point

Robert Donkers

The first four EC environmental programmes (1973-end of 1992) resulted in more than 200 pieces of Community legislation. The European Programme of Policy and Action in relation to the Environment and Sustainable Development "Towards Sustainability", or the Fifth EC Environment Action Programme, which the European Commission adopted in March 1992 and the European Parliament and the Council endorsed at the end of 1992, marks a new approach which differs fundamentally from that applied in previous programmes:

- it focuses on economic agents and activities rather than waiting for environmental problems to emerge;
- it endeavours to initiate changes in current economic trends and practices, so as to ensure sustainable socio-economic development for present and future generations;
- it aims to achieve such changes through optimum involvement of all sectors of society in a spirit of shared responsibility.

Where previous programmes relied almost exclusively on legislative measures, the Fifth Programme recognises that where legislation still is important, a broader mix of instruments, including self-regulation and market-based instruments, is needed to bring about the results in practice.

The 1996 progress report

The last three years have witnessed some results of the change of approach. The Commission adopted on 10 January 1996 a progress report on implementation of the programme. In relation to the environmental themes it builds on the information published by the European Environment Agency in "Environment in the European Union" (1995). The progress report marks:

- improved and more regular contacts with a broader range of partners, including industry;
- emphasis on framework legislation (in the fields of water and air) rather than detailed legislation;
- modification and simplification of existing legislation (environment impact assessment, drinking water) and codification (labelling and packaging of chemicals);
- emphasis on market-based and fiscal measures such as eco-auditing, eco-label, liability, voluntary agreements, eco-taxes, tax reform, etc.

- improved integration of environmental considerations by larger industry; to some extent in energy and transport and hardly progress in the agriculture and tourism sectors.

New action plan

The Commission adopted on 24 January 1996 an action plan with priority areas and actions at EU level. The overall approach and strategy of the programme remains valid but priority setting and more operational action are needed to give sustainable development and the implementation of the programme a new impulse.

The key priorities identified are:

- actions to integrate the environment into the five main policy sectors: industry (with focus on SMEs), agriculture, energy, transport and tourism;
- a broader mix of policy instruments, in particular focusing on economic and fiscal instruments. Frameworks will be developed for the use of voluntary agreements and for "green" levies and charges, and the EU will encourage fiscal reform;
- legislation is still needed as part of the policy instrument mix and simplification, better implementation and enforcement of environmental legislation are necessary. A communication on implementation and enforcement will be presented;
- increased efforts to raise the awareness of the European citizen in order to bring about changes in behaviour. Actions will focus on information and communication campaigns, and training and education;
- in relation to environment themes, priorities are climate change, acidification and air quality, integration of biodiversity in other policies, water, waste, noise and risk management of chemicals and installations;;
- the Community needs to take a greater leadership role on international environmental issues. In particular more emphasis is needed on environmental problems in central and east European countries, the Mediterranean and Baltic regions, and at the global level (on issues such as trade, climate change, biodiversity, the UNCED follow-up).

The plan notes that success in these areas will only be possible if actions are supported by better data on the state of the environment, environmental and performance indicators, sound scientific information and improved cost-benefit approaches.

The action plan will now be sent to the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament for agreement by the new co-decision procedure as laid down by the Maastricht Treaty. This could ensure a greater degree of political commitment to achieving Community environment objectives than was possible with previous programmes. ■

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Robert Donkers was a member of the team responsible for the elaboration of the Fifth Action Programme. He currently co-ordinates the examination process of the Fifth Action Programme within the European Commission (DG XI). This article only reflects the views of the author and does not in any way commit the European Commission.

Difficulties in implementation

Dana Karanjac

The European Environmental Bureau (EEB), as a federation of environmental NGOs, has been following closely the implementation of various environmental programmes and charters. In November 1995 the EEB organised a theme workshop bringing together a number of local associations, representatives of regional and local administrations and research institutions, in order to evaluate existing regional and local environmental plans as well as other types of local environmental contracts and their implementation.

We can talk about basic implementation difficulties which arise, broadly speaking, whatever the country, field of application or geographical scale involved.

Conditions

First of all, the definition of good environmental declarations demands a global, integrated and cross-sectoral approach to environmental management. Current practice shows that most existing administrations in charge of implementation are not adapted to this new approach. Their work is most commonly subdivided into specific sectors, and the departments dealing with these sectors are rarely used to co-operating. In some cases the administration does not even have jurisdiction over all of the issues raised in environmental declarations, for example the integration of economic, environmental and social aspects. As a result, existing administrative bodies have to be restructured to meet these new demands. In the United Kingdom, many municipal councils in charge of developing and implementing locally Agenda 21 have constituted so-called "task forces", which, at the highest administrative level, centralise representatives from each department. These representatives discuss the problems together and provide constant feedback to their respective divisions, in order to find integrated solutions to given problems.

Co-operation

Another difficulty in the implementation of environmental declarations is the divergence between territorial limits within which an administration ordinarily operates, and the scope of intervention necessary for effective local environmental management. In the case of river charters for example, it is rare to find a single local administration whose territorial limits contain an entire river basin; environmental management of mountain regions requires interregional and sometimes even transfrontier co-operation. In consequence, when working together, different public authorities have to redefine their roles in the local political and administrative system. Such co-operation can often be perceived as a threat: the removal of certain powers and competencies from a public authority can

naturally meet great resistance. France, however, offers a successful example for drafting and implementation of many river charters which are co-ordinated by a single administration created specifically for each river basin. Nonetheless, its role is mainly restricted to managing the co-operation processes, and does not extend to the level of decision-making which remains within the sphere of departmental or regional authorities.

Possible conflicts

Environmental declarations and charters can bring about conflicts between national and local policies. Since most are applied at local, regional or interregional level, they need to be consistent with national policy in order to be fully effective. Yet this is often not the case. Discord between national and local policies is particularly apparent in the transport and energy sector. For example, European member states with important car manufacturing industries create various fiscal and legislative incentives to encourage citizens and private companies to buy and use cars. They may also decide to privatise and cut railway networks, judging them financially unviable. Such measures, brought in at national level, create further obstacles to local authorities trying to implement a public transport policy within their local sustainable development plan.

Partnerships

As a result of Rio Agenda 21, environmental declarations and charters today underline the importance of partnerships between various socio-economic actors. Depending on the specific issues of any given declaration, the actors may range from public authorities, private sector organisations (in itself a panoply of different interest groups) all the way down to local citizen groups. Until now, administrations in most European countries have functioned on the basis of the law and its power to exercise it, and simply are not accustomed to working in conjunction with users. There remains a huge gulf between the two sides: on one hand corporate structures and civil servants with their own long-established language; on the other, a diverse range of users who, as it were, speak many different languages and whose organisation is more loose.

Great effort is required to raise awareness amongst users, private sector and local citizen groups, in order to motivate their participation and enable their adoption of a wide, rather than a single issue, approach. In return, public authorities responsible for organising the partnership process often lack funding for effective information and awareness-raising campaigns. As a result, potential new partners (certain parts of the private sector and local citizen groups) are rarely involved early on, at the conceptual stage in the drafting of environmental plans. Their participation at



later stages limits their contribution to opposition and conflict instead of giving them an opportunity to provide constructive input.

Few concrete measures

The environmental declarations and charters themselves are often very broadbrush documents which state goals (the intention to adopt a local environmental policy) but leave out precise definitions of how to reach them (methods, budgets, instruments and implementation tools). Deadlines (short, medium and long-term objectives) are often absent. The point is that when these elements are not specifically part of a declaration, signatories cannot always be legally bound to fulfil concrete actions.

Nevertheless, the increasingly widespread adoption of environmental declarations and charters indicates that there is a growing political will to change existing policies. There remains though the danger that these initiatives be perceived only as pilot projects, isolated and destined to fail to radically change mainstream policies. It is therefore essential that environmental charters become integrated overall initiatives, encompassing valid existing plans and, in doing so, founding realistic yet global environmental action programmes.

It is of course too early to appraise the effectiveness in practice of current environmental declarations. Their success depends on certain important adjustments still to be made in existing political and administrative structures, on changes in the behaviour of all the socio-economic actors involved and on the redefinition of existing tools for the implementation of global environmental policies. ■

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Time for action

Lucia Ceuca

In the field of nature protection and conservation, strategies increasingly take a large-scale, consensual approach, backed by the authorities and the players concerned. Such an approach demands not only open minds and dialogue, but also a desire from all sides for a healthy, undamaged environment.

Governmental efforts and co-ordination

Activities relating to nature conservation, water, and noise and air pollution are frequently accompanied by declarations all echoing the same principle, namely "the policy and measures proposed will be effective only if governments develop co-operation and co-ordinate activities". The guiding principles of a sound environment policy concern most, if not all, decision-makers. A decision affecting several regions will be difficult to implement and needs to be part of a common policy. It takes time to make arrangements for co-operation and identify all the different parties involved.

No precision and no obligation

The main aim of a declaration is to set out principles. Generally speaking, such principles are not sufficiently precise to be applicable as they stand, and additional instruments are needed.

Moreover, the non-binding nature of declarations is not conducive to action. And as the

texts can be used as a negotiation framework, action is delayed even further.

A new situation for eastern European countries, including Romania, is for target groups to be involved in the application of a declaration. Public participation in decisions concerning the environment is particularly worthwhile. In order to promote dialogue in environmental issues and organise responsible collaboration, the government has provided the necessary institutional framework, at both central and local level.

Legal framework

Early this year, in Romania, major legislation - a new environment act - was adopted which, along with other texts, regulates public participation in decisions concerning the environment, and lays down the regulatory framework for procedural and institutional guarantees and the arrangements for the implementation of decisions.

An effective legal framework sets in motion the machinery, activities and material and human resources needed to translate the concepts and ideas contained in the declarations into action.

Funding

The economic situation poses a further problem since it is not possible to make the enormous investments necessary to rehabilitate landscapes and clean up the soil, water and air.

Help from western countries is therefore vitally important for the emerging democracies of eastern Europe.

Role of the media

During the implementation of a programme or project resulting from a declaration, the general public must be kept abreast of developments so that it can play an active and informed part. The media should provide information not just occasionally, when a declaration is adopted. They have an especially important role and responsibility when it comes to educating the public.

For this reason, the support programme for each declaration must include a series of measures to ensure that the declaration in question is publicised, understood and implemented.

I believe that the above points can help to overcome the problems associated with implementing environmental declarations.

It is an ambitious but realistic goal, given Romania's potential and its desire to rediscover what nature has to offer. ■

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Urban Environment Charter

Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg

Adopted by the *Conseil de Communauté* in February 1993, the Environment Charter is the product of a debate launched in 1990 and open to a great many local associations and businesses.

When it was decided to draw up the Environment Charter, the *Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg* clearly saw the need to review its environment strategy. The charter is an instrument of observation and anticipation but it is also a contract between the local authority and its citizens. It includes a series of projects in a coherent framework reflecting a desire to improve the quality of the environment. Since it is backed up by financial commitments totalling more than a billion French francs, it is clearly a practical document. It addresses chiefly, but not exclusively, the improvement of air quality, the preservation of water resources and waste management.

Think globally, act locally

We have to think globally because the consequences of environmental damage are, for the most part, worldwide. We have to act locally because a local authority is affected by the environment even though its responsibility in fields as specific as air quality are indirect, to say the least. A local authority must intervene to anticipate the effects of a development. It is responsible for the present and future interests of users.

Air quality

The traffic plan and the expansion of public transport services are practical responses to the problem of air pollution. After securing the *Zone de Protection Spéciale* category for Strasbourg and its suburbs and reducing in the process industrial-source sulphur dioxide emissions, we had to tackle the problem of motor vehicles. The traffic plan is more than just the tram and the pedestrianisation of Strasbourg's city centre, it also promotes cycling, walking and all other alternatives to motor vehicles for getting around town.

Water protection

The groundwater table provides an abundant supply of naturally good quality, easily accessible water. But the very fact that it is easily accessible makes it vulnerable. To ensure that future generations enjoy the same quality of drinking water, the Environment Charter includes a strategic plan for drinking-water supply. A programme to diversify groundwater catchments, the improved protection of surface catchment areas and the launching of a groundwater observatory will improve our understanding of water, and hence our ability to protect it.

Water resources include rivers and the natural environment. The multiannual purification



Tram, Strasbourg

contract included in the Environment Charter provides for the consolidation of waste water drainage networks and the creation of a retention basin to significantly reduce discharge of waste water into the natural environment, particularly during heavy storms.

Reclaiming waste

The charter sets out the broad lines of the new strategy for household waste management, which is now well under way. The introduction of waste collection centres, the sorting of glass, paper, plastics and food cartons, the gradual extension of selective door-to-door collecting and so on clearly show that the *Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg* is committed to expanding its waste-processing facilities. The goal is to reduce progressively the quantity of wastes incinerated, by reclaiming and recycling them.

Citizens' contract

By early 1996, more than 85% of the undertakings made in the Environment Charter had either been achieved or were under way. From the reintroduction of new plant species in local forests to the purchase of electric vehicles, via the reduction of noise and the creation of new green areas, the charter covers all aspects of the environment and quality of life. It remains a reference instrument for the local authority. However, while it is the local authority's responsibility to deal with problems in the community, it also has a duty to ask each individual to contribute to the well-being of that community. In that sense, the charter is also a citizens' contract. ■

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Electric car hire

Towards sustainable farming

André Grammont

Deeply transformed by the production boom of the last few decades, the agricultural world today has a new look about it. Farms have been modernised and mentalities have moved forward, bringing with them an increasingly acute environmental awareness and an aspiration to a better quality of life. The Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has therefore had to examine ways of promoting viable, environment-friendly farming.

Balanced, diversified management

The sustainable development plan consists of developing a coherent strategy for farming that will take into account the three roles, economic, social and environmental, that society now expects agriculture to fulfil.

In practice, this new direction for farming implies input reduction, which could take the following forms:

- pure agriculture, with high value added production;
- economic diversification based on a wide range of farm activities (farm tourism, product processing, provision of services to ensure upkeep of land and so on).

After the experimental phase, and the analysis of the operation and its results, it should be possible to bring the measure into widespread use and, where necessary, adapt regulations to bring them more closely into line with the measures planned under the next CAP review.

From ideas to action

The sustainable development plan is designed primarily as an instrument to help farmers in their analysis and consideration of farm problems, which means it can be adapted to the great variety of situations that exist. The situation of each farm is examined individually, once the territorial, is now well under way. The introduction of waste collection centres, the sorting of glass, paper, social, economic and environmental context has been analysed.

Sites are selected from a homogenous area, corresponding to an "activity basin" representing an entity for local development.

At the end of this first phase, a diagnosis of the area selected is made and all the specific characteristics, assets, handicaps and constraints of that area are identified, after which each of the farms concerned is analysed. With this information, a status report can be drawn up taking environmental and economic factors together. An agro-environmental diagnosis is made for each farm in conjunction with institutional partners (professional farming bodies, local

authorities, environmental protection associations and so on).

The result is a farm plan which consists, for the farmer, of concluding a sustainable development contract with the State, or with local authorities, for an optimum period of ten years. The contract includes training and technical follow-up support so that the farmer may acquire and master the skills needed to keep up with developments in farming.

It is at this stage that the funds needed to implement the sustainable development plans (specific loans and existing financial instruments such as agro-environmental measures and other credit schemes) are mobilised.

Making strides

This operation, decided by the Interministerial Committee on 28 November 1991, has been introduced in phases.

In early 1992 a feasibility test carried out on 22 farms showed that the fourfold objective of economic viability, environmental integration, market control and rural management could be achieved.

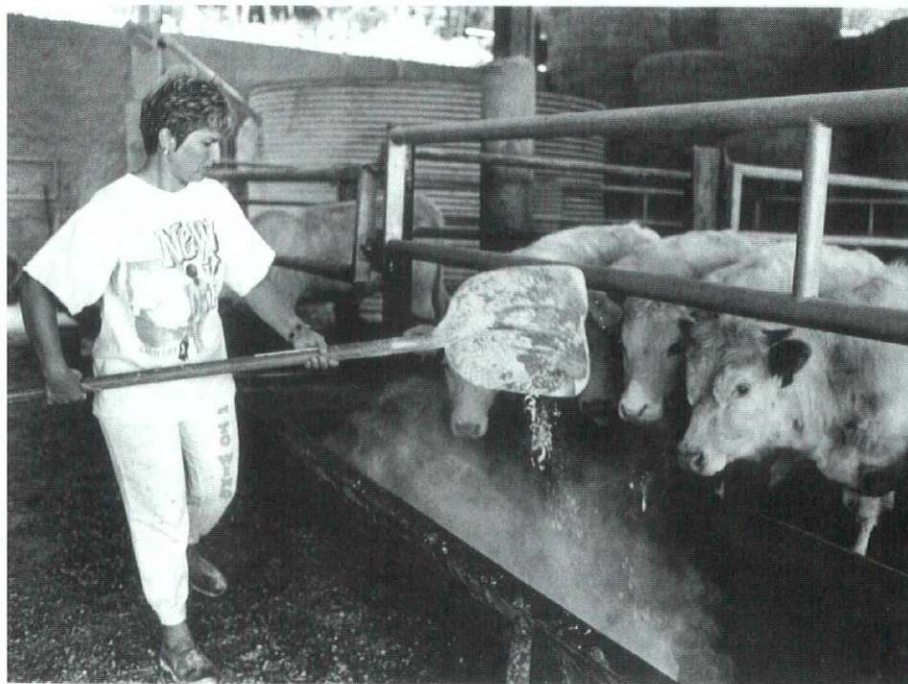
This somewhat limited preliminary experiment was followed in early 1993 by a full-scale feasibility study concerning 835 farms over 37 small regions; a further 22 sites were added in 1994, involving 414 more farmers. National and community funds were mobilised for this purpose.

1995 saw the experimental introduction of the contract phase, reserved for farmers who, having received approval for their projects, took part in the feasibility study: the 400 projects involved in this operation have financial backing from the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The success of this field experiment, in which the European Union is playing a large part, should help to prepare the ground for the changes that need to be made to European regulations if farming activities are to give more consideration to the environment. ■

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Farmers sign sustainable development plans with the government for ten-year periods

At the Council of Europe



Draft European Charter of Mountain Regions

In Europe, mountain regions have extremely important functions of public interest, in environmental, economic, social, political and cultural terms. Every mountain region in Europe has its own problems to contend with, which can be explained especially by structural and institutional factors. The specific nature of these problems makes it very difficult to develop common strategies to promote sustainable development in mountain regions and, in the process, improve the quality of life of the local populations. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) has been called upon to draft guidelines in the form of a conventional instrument, for the sustainable and balanced development of all mountain areas in Europe. To this end, in September 1995 the CLRAE submitted a draft European Charter of Mountain Regions to the Committee of Ministers with a view to its opening for signature as a Council of Europe convention. This international legal instrument will make it possible to lay the foundations in all Europe's mountain regions for overcoming the traditional conflict between economic development and environmental protection and to introduce national and regional strategies based on the development of local and regional potential and human and natural resources.

4th Conference of Mediterranean Regions

At the 4th Conference of Mediterranean Regions, held in Nicosia and Limassol (Cyprus) from 20 to 22 September 1995 and organised jointly by the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, the represen-

tatives of Mediterranean towns and regions compared their experiences for the purpose of establishing inter-territorial co-operation in the fields of demography and migration, intolerance, xenophobia and racism, and water resources and forest management.

Aware of their responsibility, the representatives of local and regional authorities stressed that inter-territorial co-operation would be fully effective only if it formed part of a Mediterranean policy implemented by the Council of Europe, in keeping with its pioneering role in the common management of European affairs.

To facilitate these co-operation programmes the participants recommended that the Committee of Ministers adopt the draft Convention on Inter-territorial Co-operation in the form of an open convention, so that any interested non-member Mediterranean countries could accede to it.

For its part, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe could help to promote and, where appropriate, co-ordinate these co-operation projects.

Contribution of the CLRAE to ENCY

More than 200 people took part in the International Conference on the Role of Local and Regional Authorities in Nature Conservation in Towns (Bratislava, 11-12 December 1995), organised jointly by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) and the Slovak Ministry of the Environment.

This Conference was the climax to the local and regional authorities' contribution to European Nature Conservation Year 1995.

Several political representatives of European towns and cities presented specific programmes selected by the CLRAE as outstanding examples of nature conservation in towns. The active participation in this conference of environment policy representatives from Brussels, Metz, Oslo, Copenhagen, Naples, Seville and Sofia and from towns and cities in Slovakia and other European countries highlighted the importance of local and regional authorities as major partners as well as target groups for European Nature Conservation Year 1995.

The Conference was closed by Mr Pavan, President of the International Organising Committee of European Nature Conservation Year 1995.

The contributions presented at the Bratislava Conference will be put together to form a handbook illustrating the most innovative approaches in the field.

15th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention

"We all have to contribute to the conservation of the common European natural heritage." Antti Haapanen, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention

The 15th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats was held in Strasbourg from 22 to 26 January 1996. Mr A. Haapanen, Chairman of the committee, noted, in his opening speech, that there were many cases in which the positive results achieved in various fields of nature conservation could be attributed to the Bern Convention. However, he wanted more attention and energy to be devoted to habitat conservation. The Standing Committee therefore adopted a resolution to set up a network (Emerald Network), for areas of special conservation interest. In this way, the Standing Committee demonstrated its desire to contribute to the implementation of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, adopted in Sofia in October 1995 by the ministerial conference "Environment for Europe". In addition to setting up this pan-European ecological network, the Standing Committee amended its Appendices II and III on strictly protected and protected fauna species, to include new species of mammal, including the narwhal (*Monodon monoceros*) and the finback (*Balaenoptera physalus*). It also adopted three recommendations for the attention of the 33 Contracting Parties to the Convention, on the conservation of European globally threatened birds, the conservation of European semi-aquatic insectivora, and the protection of some wild plant species which are subject to exploitation and commerce. The Standing Committee welcomed two new Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention, Poland and Tunisia. ■

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