

'1. The loss of biodiversity is irreplaceable; its conservation is one of the greatest challenges of this decade.

'2. The Bern Convention should be ratified and fully implemented by all European Nations; priority should be given to virgin forests and clean freshwater.

'3. Terrestrial ecosystems strongly influenced by the Atlantic climate are particularly vulnerable; countries on the western seaboard of Europe must cooperate for the effective conservation of these ecosystems.

'4. The ecology of the seas is poorly understood; the preservation of stocks of marine fishes, mammals, and birds, is important both economically and ecologically.

'5. Traditional cultural landscapes contain a rich diversity of species that are adapted to exist with human societies; they are worthy of special attention.

'6. Monitoring of environmental quality is increasingly important for human health and well-being; a rich diversity of organisms is essential for the selection of suitable indicator species.

'7. Biotechnology, increasingly used for the production of pharmaceutical products, for improving crop species, etc., relies heavily on the conservation of the planet's genetic resources.

'8. Introduction of species to new geographical areas, and the release of genetically modified organisms, are both perceived potentially to reduce biodiversity; risk assessment is essential before such introductions or releases are made.

'9. Understanding the biodiversity of the planet relies on a thorough knowledge of the species and communities present, and hence on the science of the naming and classification of plants and animals.

'10. It is not too late to conserve the biodiversity of this planet for future generations. The scientific knowledge is available or attainable; it requires the political will, backed by adequate resources, to achieve this essential aim.'

Impending doom can all-too-frequently absorb discussions about conservation issues. It is noteworthy that this group of 100 scientists, mostly biologists from Europe, did not take a gloomy view, even though they recognized that we have already passed 'the eleventh hour'. Fascinatingly, the concluding paragraph of the Executive Summary did not stress the need for further research, although this occupied a lot of time in the scientific proceedings; the scientists challenged the politicians to have the will to conserve the Earth's biodiversity. Will the politicians accept this challenge?

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SEVENTH PARLIAMENTARY AND SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE, ENTITLED COPING WITH GLOBAL CHANGE: THE ROLE OF SCIENCE AND DEMOCRACY, HELD IN THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE CENTRE, 2 RIDEAU STREET, OTTAWA, ONTARIO K1A 0A3, CANADA, DURING 11–14 JUNE 1990

The themes of precaution and of international financing to boost environmental protection technology and

transfer it to the developing world, dominated this important scientific meeting, which was hosted by the parliament of Canada. Delegates included ministers of science and technology, senior scientists from both western and eastern Europe as well as Canada, and around 150 parliamentarians from practically throughout Europe, Canada, and USA. The Conference accepted the need to act ahead of scientific uncertainty when coping with environmental threats, and sympathized with the need to establish international financing arrangements to enable Third World Countries to develop in an environmentally favourable manner. There was no formal communique, or declaration — just a meeting of minds.

The Conference heard speeches from the Canadian Environment Minister, from Professor Umberto Colombo (President-Elect of the European Science Foundation), from Professor G.A.K. Menon (President of the International Council of Scientific Unions), from Professor Eduardo Goldemberg (of the University of São Paulo, Brazil), and from Dr Mansour Khalid (President of the Centre for Our Common Future), amongst others. The view prevailed that technological development in the fields of environmental surveillance, pollution control, waste recovery, and rehabilitation of degraded land, was still at a relatively early stage. At present it is worth about 120 thousand million ECU per year in the OECD countries; investment should increase to 200 thousand million ECU by AD 2000 even without 'technology-forcing'*.

The Conference also heard that encouragement, and more precise deployment than at present of the most desirable technology, could be achieved by the use of levies on environmentally damaging activities and on the depletion of renewable resources. Such levies would primarily be aimed initially at removing wasteful subsidies, subsequently at encouraging efficient use of resources, and ultimately at eliminating sources of global damage where the burden of remedial expenditure on future societies might be very high indeed.

Levies should not, however, be allowed to act on their own. Much wasteful resource-consumption — particularly in energy, agriculture, and timber production — is not

* The forcing of damaging technologies to environmentally undesirable extents. — Ed.

[Concluded on page 134]

Important Prospect

FOURTH WRIGHT SCIENCE COLLOQUIUM FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC ON 'THE EVOLUTION AND DEMOLITION OF PLANET EARTH', TO BE HELD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GENEVA DUFOUR AUDITORIUM, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, DURING 17–21 SEPTEMBER 1990

The fourth biennial Wright Science Colloquium for public scientific education, under the general rubric 'Man and his Universe — Science for the Non-scientist', will discuss current scientific thinking about how Man's environment has evolved, how it might now be changing as a result of his activity, and how he might best adjust to the process of future planetary management.

Five principal speakers will attend throughout, give two lectures each, comment in panel discussion on each others' views, and answer questions from the audience,

with simultaneous interpretation between English and French. The ten sessions are organized for the maximum convenience of the general public, from 17.30 to 19.30 hrs and 20.30 to 22.30 hrs on each of the five days. They are open to all without charge, prior reservation, or other formality. Visitors are welcome from anywhere and for any part or parts of the programme.

This year's principal speakers are James Ephraim Lovelock, from Cornwall, England, inventor, co-Author of the 'Gaia' hypothesis of a self-regulating Earth; Gordon J.F. MacDonald, from Washington, DC, Chief Scientist of the Mitre Corporation; Michael B. McElroy, Chairman of the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Richard Muller, Professor at the University of California at Berkeley; and William Aaron Nierenberg, Director Emeritus of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at La Jolla, California.

The detailed programme with times and titles will be available by mid-August. Enquiries and reservations for group attendance will be welcomed meanwhile by the undersigned.

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Important Prospect

FIRST INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES ON TROPICAL RAIN-FORESTS: FOREST '90, TO BE HELD AT THE HOTEL TROPICAL, MANAUS, AMAZONAS, BRAZIL, DURING 7-13 OCTOBER 1990

The Symposium is being organized by the Brazilian Society for Appraisal of the Environment (BIOSFERA), the Brazilian Geochemical Society (SBG), and the Brazilian Nature Conservation Foundation (FBCN). The aim of the Symposium will be to compile a document which will help to produce future strategies for the Amazon Region, although many of the findings should be conducive to the preservation of tropical rain-forests in general. The Symposium will cover themes related to tropical rainforest ecosystems, their dynamics and sustainability, and Man's interference and impacts, with special emphasis on the Amazon Region.

The themes have been divided into 14 different groups as indicated below. The activities within the groups will include: conference round-table discussions, technical sessions, plenary sessions, poster sessions, and workshops.

Group 1: Tropical Ecosystems: Dynamics and Sustainability, will include Hydrology, Climate, Geology/Mining, Geomorphology, Zoology, Botany, Integrated Evaluations, and Environmental Geochemistry.

Group 2: Alternatives to Deforestation and the Policies Necessary; including Management, Recuperation, Reforestation, Agroforestry, and Forest Legislation.

Group 3: Mining, Industrialization, and Environmental Control; progress to date and prospects, to include

policies, recovery, of spoiled areas, techniques and methods, 'RIMAs' 'EIAs' (studies of environmental impact) and 'Garimpos' (prospection/mining).

Group 4: The people of the forest; immigrants and models for occupation; impacts and alternatives — including the question of land ownership, the native 'Indian' community, models for land occupation, integrated rural projects, and the question of road access.

Group 5: Quality of life and environmental education in the forest region; to include health, environmental education, urbanization, and sanitation.

Group 6: Water resources and large-scale energy and irrigation projects; to include dams and reservoirs, and materials and technologies.

Group 7: Large agricultural and grazing projects and Nature conservation, impacts and alternatives.

Group 8: Environmental legislation and forestry policy.

Group 9: Programmes of cooperation among the Amazon Pact countries.

Group 10: Participation of nongovernmental entities.

Group 11: The action of governmental agencies and international organizations.

Group 12: Development strategies and their environmental aspects.

Group 13: Integrated studies and land-use planning.

Group 14: Other major themes of interest.

The working languages of the Symposium will be English and Portuguese, with simultaneous translation both-ways provided. The registration fee is US \$225, or US \$45 for students. Further details, including travel and accommodation information, can be obtained by contacting:

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Important Prospect

INTERNATIONAL EVENT ON BIODIVERSITY AND LANDSCAPES: HUMAN CHALLENGES FOR CONSERVATION IN THE CHANGING WORLD, TO BE HELD AT THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY, UNIVERSITY PARK CAMPUS, PENNSYLVANIA 16802, USA, DURING 22-25 OCTOBER 1990

The above will provide an opportunity for concerned professionals and individuals to join distinguished scientists, artists, scholars, and policymakers, from around the world, in discussing an agenda of issues regarding biological diversity and natural landscapes.

This event will address: (1) the impact of the present state of biodiversity on human civilization; (2) ecological, ethical, cultural, and sociopolitical, perspectives on biodiversity and natural landscapes; (3) innovative initiatives, for conservation and restoration of these natural resources, and (4) the need for a national/global policy agenda regarding future development and conservation.