

## Human Environment Conference: The Rush for Influence

On 16 June 1972, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment will conclude its 2-week session in Stockholm with a set of treaties, resolutions, and agreements intended to keep the world habitable. As an essential component of nearly all of its actions, the conference will set machinery in motion to conduct research and to distribute and exchange technical data among nations.

Just how this will be done is yet to be decided, but a massive international scientific establishment is sure to result, and several groups and individuals are already actively striving for influence as statesmen of international science. At the same time, others seek to lessen the influence of the new establishment by offering themselves up as the counterestablishment of international science. To those acquainted with the politics of American science, it all looks vaguely familiar.

In discussing the conference, U.N. officials take pains to point out that whatever the results, the United Nations will not assume the role of policeman to apprehend polluters around the globe. Indeed, any resolution offered to the conference that even hints at an incursion on national sovereignty is certain to meet with overwhelming opposition. Except for a few items on the agenda, such as the proposed treaty regulating ocean dumping, nations will not even be requested to modify their ecological behavior.

Such limitations stem, to a certain extent, from the fears of the less-developed countries that conventions aimed at protecting the environment might retard their economic growth. In speaking before a U.N. committee on 8 October, the ambassador to the United Nations from Brazil, Sergio Armando Frazão, declared that he saw in some aspects of the concern for the environment in wealthy countries a "malicious trend according to which the old patterns of colonial paternalism are being replaced by a pseudo-scientific

outlook to justify nondevelopment."

As part of an extensive campaign to allay the fears of the developing countries, conference Secretary-General Maurice F. Strong assembled a group of experts on development in Founex, Switzerland, last July; they declared in their report that "in a large measure the kind of environmental problems that are of importance to developing countries are those that can be overcome by development itself." In this vein, one of the six major headings to be taken up by the nations assembled at Stockholm is titled "Development and Environment," and includes proposals to assist the developing countries both technically and financially in appraising the state of their own environment, establishing minimal standards, and taking environmental considerations into account in their future development. Moreover, what actions are agreed to in the more traditional environmental areas, such as natural resources management and soil conservation, will emphasize technical assistance and new research programs.

Thus the question of how the research, technical, and financial assistance is to be carried out is one of the principal political concerns of the conference. The organizational implications of the conference proposals will be the primary subject discussed at the next meeting of the 27-nation preparatory conference, to be held in New York next March.

Meanwhile, however, several groups have been hustling for a piece of the post-Stockholm organizational action. Prominent among them are two huge umbrella organizations: the International Congress of Scientific Unions (ICSU) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Both count as members a variety of organizations around the world, and, in the words of an official of IUCN, the two groups are "close friends." American members of ICSU include the National Academy of Sciences, the AAAS,

and a number of professional societies. The IUCN's membership is a mixture of governments, government agencies such as park services, national organizations, and international organizations.

Until plans for the Stockholm conference got under way, neither organization carried out activities beyond a few formalities, but as the Stockholm conference plans were set out in 1968, IUCN increased its budget and its scale of operations, while ICSU established the Special Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE). Both have since directed a mass of input into the conference preparations. Those principally associated with the efforts of the two groups are Thomas F. Malone, dean of graduate studies at the University of Connecticut at Storrs and secretary of SCOPE, and Richard N. Gardner of Columbia University Law School, who serves as IUCN's liaison man with the United Nations.

### International Ombudsmen

The case for IUCN and ICSU participation in a variety of committee and advisory roles to open up after Stockholm has been put forward in a number of documents submitted to the conference secretariat. For example, an article by Gardner declared that ICSU and IUCN can play an indispensable role as environmental "ombudsmen" in the post-Stockholm period. "These centers of scientific excellence and environmental expertise can raise questions about government policies in the absence of formal government procedures. And they can prepare public opinion for bolder measures than governments are now willing to accept."

Another report, prepared by an international group of experts summoned to Aspen, Colorado, by the International Institute of Environmental Affairs, proclaimed that "the most compelling requirement for a creative attack on priority problems of the human environment is an intimate partnership between the scientific community and the intergovernmental community." The report went on to recommend that "the world's scientific community, broadly represented by ICSU," organize "a world institute for environmental research and development." Such plans are, for the time, merely speculative. Over the past year, however, both IUCN and ICSU, through its committee, SCOPE, has supplied the conference secretariat with a mass of data and suggestions to assist in the

preparatory phases of the conference. While both groups are official consultants to the United Nations, their contributions to date have generated some concern among certain delegates and observers of the conference.

According to Henry Kallermann, a staff man at the National Academy of Sciences who handles the affairs of SCOPE in Washington, "SCOPE is chiefly interested in playing an advisory role to governments." The group was asked by Strong to submit a number of reports as part of the technical input into the conference preparations. These included a plan for the global monitoring of pollutants, an international registry of chemical compounds, and a report on ramifications of man-made ecosystems. In fact, in several instances Strong turned to SCOPE when he sought "the advice of the international scientific community."

Apparently the contributions from IUCN came with somewhat less solicitation. "They've been pretty aggressive with respect to the conference," remarked one U.N. official. The IUCN has drafted a number of treaties, some of which may be ratified before the conference and others at the conference itself. These include a proposal to establish a World Heritage Foundation of those areas distinctive enough to be of interest to all mankind—for example, the Grand Canyon or the game preserves in Kenya. Further, IUCN has submitted position papers on a wide variety of other topics to be considered by the conference. "We're helping on almost every agenda item," said Gardner in an interview with *Science*.

To a certain extent, problems inevitably occur when organizations purporting to represent a huge, diverse constituency put forward a position. Of necessity, decisions are reached by a comparatively small board of directors. It would be nearly impossible, for example, to determine the viewpoint of the membership of the AAAS on a given issue, let alone to determine the viewpoint of the membership of an organization that included the AAAS along with dozens of other scientific organizations around the world.

#### Extinction Threat

Nevertheless, the criticisms persist. In the case of a treaty drafted by IUCN to regulate the import and export of threatened wildlife, an agreement that may go into effect even before the Stockholm conference, the National

Audubon Society, a member of IUCN, has declared that the treaty would actually hasten the extinction of certain species—it provides protection only when a certain animal is threatened with "worldwide" extinction, not when it becomes rare in particular regions of the world. Conservation groups are further upset with IUCN because the organization took money from the International Fur Traders Federation to carry out a count of spotted cats in South America. For the most part, criticism of the technical input into the conference to date has been aimed not so much at its content, as at the fact that it appears to have originated from relatively few sources.

"In this area where there is more concern than data," said Barry Commoner of Washington University, "it's important to get the widest viewpoint. The most serious weakness with the conference has been that it has not relied on the entire scientific community." Conference officials maintain that the technical input has not been all that narrow and that they have neither the time nor the money to actively solicit scientific advice from around the world.

Nevertheless, Commoner and his associates in the Scientists' Institute for Public Information (SIPI) intend to rectify this "weakness" by supplying technical information directly to the delegates in Stockholm—particularly to the delegates of the smaller countries, who will not come to the conferences with an army of technical advisers.

This they intend to do through the facilities of a forum to be run simultaneously with the Stockholm conference for the benefit of the United Nations' numerous, affiliated, nongovernmental organizations (NGO's). At the national level, in the United States, for example, the NGO's range from the United Nations Association to the Campfire Girls and the National Association of Manufacturers, with a group of similar international organizations affiliated as international NGO's. Only a few of the NGO's, SIPI among them, are concerned with the environment. Since the United Nations began the relationship with the NGO's, it has been a most sedate, one-way affair; by and large, the only function of the organizations has been to generate a nongovernmental constituency for the United Nations. Some of them sent representatives to pick up documents and hear an occasional briefing from U.N.

officials and then report back to their members. The proposed environmental forum in Stockholm threatens to shatter this calm.

The forum may provide an opportunity for numerous environmental groups, in addition to SIPI, to generate input into the conference. Originally, the idea of an active environmental forum in Stockholm was proposed by a group of young environmentalists, who had assembled from around the world last June in Hamilton, Ontario, at the request of Maurice Strong, to advise the conference. The delegates at Hamilton envisaged the forum as an opportunity for interaction among the conference delegates, the NGO's and other interested conservation groups, and the general public. The Hamilton delegates thought that, in addition to providing technical advice, the forum might offer the press and the public an "informed explanation of the implications" of actions taken by the delegates, to be directed toward the press and the public.

#### Tennis Court Sideshow

To date, little is known of the particulars of the forum except that the Swedish government has set aside the Royal Tennis Courts (about a mile from the three conference meeting halls) to house the gathering. Questions of who is to participate and what sort of activities are to be allowed are still the subject of negotiations between the NGO's and the U.N. Secretariat. For U.N. officials, as well as the representatives of some of the more traditional NGO's, the forum poses a number of potentially serious problems. Never before in U.N. history have nongovernmental groups had the opportunity to interact and possibly influence the representatives of nations, and it is feared that the forum might become a "sideshow," detracting attention from the conference itself. Officials of the United Nations are particularly afraid that America's vocal and politically experienced ecology movement will dominate the proceedings.

Just how much all this maneuvering to offer advice will reflect itself in the actual postconference arrangement remains to be seen. But U.N. officials are quick to point out that no matter who is supplying data for the conference and who submits position papers, no decisions will be reached until the politicians from each of the 130 nations gather in Stockholm.

—ROBERT J. BAZELL