

## Editorial: *Quo vadis* UNEP?

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was created as a result of the United Nations Conference on Human Environment, held at Stockholm in 1972. It is the first United Nations agency that was located in a developing country, in Nairobi, Kenya.

When UNEP started, the environmental movement was at its crest. The "Earth Day" attracted an estimated 20 million participants in the United States alone. Since then interest in the environment may have waned somewhat, but there is no doubt that those that were committed to the cause are still continuing to work to create a better environment, and a better quality of life.

Right from the very beginning, UNEP was fortunate in having good management. Its first Executive Director was Mr. Maurice F. Strong, who was also the Secretary-General of the Stockholm Conference. In addition to Mr. Strong, the organization was very fortunate to attract men of the calibre of Dr Mostafa K. Tolba as the Deputy Executive Director, and Dr. Robert A. Frosch as the Assistant Executive Director in charge of Programme. Maurice Strong was a charismatic and dynamic leader, who has since left the organization to become the Chairman of Petro-Canada and IDRC.

Dr. Frosch is now the Administrator of NASA.

In spite of the departure of Mr. Strong and Dr. Frosch, most of the present top management has been with UNEP from its early days. Dr. Tolba became the second Executive Director, and his senior management team of Mr. Peter S. Thacher, Dr. Svenald Evteev and Mr. Yusuf J. Ahmad have all been with UNEP for a long time. The only addition has been Mr. Peter H. Oltmanns. This has provided the organization with continuity and stability. Mr. Thacher has been associated with one of UNEP's most successful programme – the Mediterranean – and both Dr. Evteev and Mr. Ahmad have already distinguished themselves in their respective positions within a very short time.

The present Executive Director of UNEP, Mostafa K. Tolba, is an internationally very well-known scientist in his own right, an excellent administrator and a man with incredible energy. This becomes self-evident when one considers the fact that during the last two years, he was not only the Executive Director of UNEP but also the Secretary-

General of the United Nations Conference on Desertification. A lesser man would have found any one of these two tasks very difficult under the best of circumstances. Dr. Tolba carried out both these tasks very successfully, so much so that the Desertification Conference was undoubtedly one of the most successful UN world conferences held so far.

The philosophy of UNEP and some of their current interests are outlined in the article by Dr. Tolba in this special issue. Other papers included are some of the recent ones prepared for the UNEP Governing Council. Special mention should be made of the *State of the Environment* report, which is prepared every year by UNEP. This is one of the most important documents that come out of UNEP every year, which is extensively read by policy-makers and other interested persons.

One may justifiably ask how successful has UNEP been in its task. It is still too early to answer, but the signs, if they are any indication, are all positive. For example, last summer Andrew Young, the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, stated that UNEP is one of the two most successful agencies of the United Nations. There is no doubt in our minds that if the criterion of success is considered to be UNEP's impacts on environmental policies of its member countries, especially on the developing countries, then UNEP has undoubtedly been more successful than its best friends ever expected it to be. This, for an organization that is only five years old, is undoubtedly a tremendous achievement.

### *Guest Editors*

Margaret R. Biswas and Asit K. Biswas  
President and Director, Biswas and Associates  
3 Valley View Road  
Ottawa  
Canada

and

International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis  
2361 Laxenburg  
Austria