

sector of UNESCO, even before a formal environmental education programme was started there. Throughout the decade of the 70s, many integrated science courses were generated around the world in which the environment was used as the integrating factor.

Let us consider why Man-environment impact is a key educational issue of the 80s. Man prides himself in being the most intelligent animal on the Earth; yet he is the only one that has caused such vast devastation of The Biosphere. In less than a thousand years, which is the blink of an eye in geologic time, he has consumed a large proportion of the fossil fuels which took Nature millions of years to produce. The air we breathe is full of noxious fumes and radioactive particles of his making.

Man has placed millions of tons of concrete and cement on roads and cities where there were once forests and wildlife. At least 3,000 square kilometres of prime farmland is disappearing each year under buildings and roads in developing countries alone. Thousands of millions of tons of soil are being lost each year as a result of deforestation and poor land-management. Hundreds of millions of rural people in developing countries are forced to strip their land of vegetation in order to find wood for cooking and heat. Each year 4,000 million tons of dung and crop residues are burned for fuel which could otherwise regenerate soils. And now Man has the capability of generating a nuclear holocaust which could devastate The Biosphere and make life on Earth extinct.

A new sense of humility must be born in mankind. We should realize that if human beings could be removed from the Earth, it could probably heal itself and become once again a planet where the oceans were clean, the air pure, and the forests green and full of wildlife. *Remember that the Earth, its plants, and its animals, can survive without us, but we cannot survive without them!*

There may be those who would believe that such a world environmental education strategy would be too grandiose a scheme. But what, short of that, is going to reverse the trends that are driving us to damage the planet further and even further? I believe that Man is intelligent enough to generate an environmental ethic, through education, which can point the way to achievement of the goal of the World Conservation Strategy, namely, sustainable development for Mankind.

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#### **Mrs Indira Gandhi becomes Honorary Chairman of the IUCN Commission on Education**

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) is pleased to announce that Mrs Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, has accepted to become honorary chairman of its Commission on Education. This was conveyed by personal letter to Dr Albert V. Baez, the Chairman of the IUCN Commission on Education.

The Commission on Education is one of IUCN's oldest, having been established in 1949, a year after the founding of the Union, and comprises an international,

voluntary group dedicated to enhancing the quality of life through educational programmes that promote conservation and sustainable development throughout the world. Its broad aim is to help the general public to understand the need to protect the environment and use natural resources wisely, and to motivate participation in activities which will attain this goal to the benefit of present and future generations.

The Commission on Education's activities are directed towards policy-makers and planners, educators, young people, and the public in general. Commission members currently total 293, drawn from 89 countries. They are active in all aspects of environmental education, and include policy-makers, scientists, educators, mass communicators, museum directors, youth leaders, and others.

#### **Virginia Environmental Endowment — A Cooperative Approach**

Through a unique decision in 1977 by a United States District Court, a penalty for environmental pollution was turned into a constructive, ongoing programme for environmental improvement. This precedent case, which occurred in the Commonwealth of Virginia, USA, has resulted in a most innovative, productive programme directed by the Virginia Environmental Endowment.

In 1977, Allied Chemical Corporation was fined \$13.2 millions for polluting the James River in Virginia with Kepone, a highly toxic and persistent insecticide. In an agreement with the federal court, Allied paid a voluntary contribution of \$8 millions to create the Virginia Environmental Endowment. In just over five years, the Endowment has awarded \$2.3 millions in grants and loans for over 80 projects to improve the environment of Virginia.

#### *Four Main Priorities*

To attract proposals which address some of the State's most critical environmental problems, the Endowment focuses its grant-making on four priorities: (1) the effects of toxic substances on human health and the environment, (2) environmental law, (3) community improvement, and (4) environmental mediation.

Two guiding principles have helped the Endowment to carve an effective role as a catalyst for State and local environmental activity. First, it recognizes that environmental concerns are global in scope but local in their effect on people's lives. Many of the Endowment's grant programmes have been designed to help people to translate national policies into local action.

Another principle which the Endowment follows is that people can accomplish more by working together than they can when working separately. New coalitions of business, government, citizens, and conservationists, are finding practical, long-term solutions to problems of keeping communities safe and liveable.

The following results of several grant awards in the Endowment's four priority areas illustrate the success of this direct, cooperative approach:

The discovery of the release of Kepone into Virginia's primary waterway was precipitated by the diagnosis of severe illness in chemical workers who were exposed to large quantities of Kepone in their workplace. With substantial support from the Endowment, research workers