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GERALD F.M. DAWE, *Editor*
&
KEITH GRICE, *Managing Editor*
Urban Nature Magazine
Urban Environment
40 Milford Road
Birmingham B17 9RL
England, UK.

IIASA Goes Global

The International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA, of Laxenburg, Austria) is an interdisciplinary, nongovernmental research institution that is sponsored by a consortium of National Member Organizations in 17 nations. The Institute conducts international and interdisciplinary scientific studies to provide timely and relevant information and options, addressing critical issues of global environmental, economic, and social, changes, for the benefit of the public, the scientific community, and national and international institutions. Its research programme focuses on three central themes: Global Environmental Change; Global Economic and Technological Transitions; and Systems Methods for the Analysis of Global Issues.

The establishment of a new North–South Fund has been announced by Dr Peter E. de Jánosi, Director of IIASA. The Fund is intended to increase the involvement of scientists from the developing world in the research work carried out at IIASA. Although founded as an East–West Institute, IIASA has, since its inception in 1972, also worked on international and global problems; indeed, with the end of the Cold War, the Institute's agenda has focused on problems of global change. This fact was recognized in the awarding of a two-years' grant by the Rockefeller Foundation of New York, beginning in May 1994. This grant provides the seed money for IIASA's North–South Fund, which is expected to be supplemented from other sources.

The Institute's current agenda calls for the study of human, environmental, and economic, dimensions of global change. This includes the less-industrialized countries of the Southern hemisphere, many of which are striving to meet development goals in the face of mounting urban pressures, population growth, rapid social change, and widespread environmental constraints.

'There is a clear need for the perspective and inputs of researchers from the South in the study of solutions to the global problems that IIASA now addresses', says Dr de Jánosi. 'Most of the projects at the Institute already have excellent connections world-wide, so we expect no difficulty in locating and recruiting the talent that is available', he adds. The establishment of the North–South Fund, which effectively begins with this grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, will ensure financial support for selected scholars from developing countries to work at IIASA. The inclusion of a North–South view will expand IIASA's horizons without detracting from its traditional East–West connections and perspectives.

ELISABETH KRIPPL, *Head*
Public Information
IIASA
A-2361 Laxenburg
Austria.

The Almería Statement on Desertification and Migration *

We must protect the land that feeds us. Following upon the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, and based on recommendations contained in *Agenda 21*, particularly its Chapter 12 on 'Managing fragile ecosystems: combating desertification and drought', the General Assembly of the United Nations decided to establish an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to

Combat Desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa [Res. 47/188, 22 Dec. '92].

Desertification is a global phenomenon, affecting all continents, engendering cross-boundary and transcontinental migrations, and forcing people in vulnerable areas [that have been] marginalized by poverty and ecological degradation, to look for better living opportunities in cities, other regions, or other countries, where further strains on the natural and social environments are apt to occur.

We must face the issues confronting the people who inhabit affected arid lands. The General Assembly of the United Nations called for an International Conference on

* Emanating from the International Symposium on Desertification and Migration, held in Almería, Spain, during 9–11 February 1994, as reported on pages 85–6 of our preceding issue by Dr Arthur H. Westing who communicated this statement. — Ed.

Population and Development [Res. 47/176, 22 Dec. '92]. The Preparatory Committee of the Conference has identified 'population distribution and migrations' amongst its priority issues.

Migration is, of course, a natural phenomenon in human history. The concern of the Symposium is that forced migrations resulting from arid-land degradation, and their consequences, often attain undesirable dimensions, both at the poles of origin and at the sites of relocation.

The number of migrants in the world, already at very high levels, nonetheless continues to increase by about 3 millions each year. Approximately half of these originate in Africa. These increases are largely of rural origin and related to land degradation. It is estimated that over 135 million people may be at risk of being displaced as a consequence of severe desertification.

Therefore, an holistic approach of local development, empowering the local population and protecting the environment within the context of a poverty-reduction strategy, should be combined with more effective migration policies [than currently exist] in such areas.

SOCIO-POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

The world's human population is projected to double within the next 50 years, and the global economic output to increase even more rapidly. In that context, the emerging trend in over-use of renewable resources may accelerate at a speed that is unprecedented in human history. Evidence is emerging for a correlation between poverty, desertification, and conflicts of various kinds, in arid and semi-arid areas. The common ground is the process of exclusion of vulnerable groups, who are subject to suffering and oppression, and who depend upon fragile ecosystems [that are already] under stress.

Of the 50 or so armed conflicts currently in progress, approximately 20 have an environmental dimension or are partly environmentally induced. Half of the latter are associated with arid lands. Many of these armed conflicts are apt to be overlooked by the central government [concerned] and the world at large.

Resulting social and political turbulence, set in motion by the exploitation and degradation of natural resources, is likely to become a major factor in geopolitical instability.

Migration into cities or onto marginal lands accelerates the impoverishment of land, resources, and people. This may lead to persistent upheaval or further migration, stimulating ethnic conflicts or social unrest elsewhere.

Environmental problems created at local or regional levels, and related conflicts, exert ever-increasing pressures on political stability at regional levels.

POLICY PRIORITIES

Inasmuch as the massive displacement of persons as refugees or otherwise in arid or semi-arid lands poses severe pressures on the scarce natural resources of those regions, effective integrated assistance strategies should link up relief programmes with local development schemes.

Sustainable land-use planning and management in drylands that are prone to desertification should focus on

vegetation, soil, and water [— also on] conservation strategies which are ecologically sound and agricultural practices which are economically viable — taking fully into consideration traditional knowledge and the participation of the local population.

Prevention of involuntary desertification-induced migration should rely on the promotion of sustainable agriculture and range management in arid lands through the provision of financing, technology, capacity-building, and economic incentives.

Regional planning should harmonize agricultural production with the development of small and medium-scale towns in rural areas. Furthermore, urgent attention should be given to [improving] understanding of the dynamic relationship between population, migration, and desertification.

Legislative, institutional, and regulatory, measures should be pursued to reform land tenure, conservation codes, harvesting, land-use practices, and water-management practices, and should further empower local rural communities to enable them to participate in the recommended changes in land management.

There is a need to review the legal status and regulatory regime governing the ever-growing number of environmental migrants and displaced persons, and to identify options for their protection and relief, helping returnees and assisting others with their integration into host communities.

ACTION PRIORITIES

The relationship between environmental degradation and migration is important and complex but yet little understood. Further research and investigation of desertification as both a cause and a consequence of displacement and cross-border migrations should thus be pursued through programmes facilitating the exchange of technical and scientific data and the constant monitoring of the process.

Such programmes should encourage comparative studies between affected regions with different cultural and economic constraints, establish an historical perspective, and foster environmental education and training initiatives in affected areas, with a view towards developing successful models.

Research on desertification-induced population movements should seek to disaggregate primary factors motivating migration, and should quantify and analyse size, geographic origin, frequency of displacement, gender and age data, and patterns of resource-use, in arid lands.

Surveys of dryland ecosystems should investigate the correlation between desertification, poverty, and migration, and become part of an early-warning system of humanitarian crises in the making.

Prospective analyses of existing or future conflict potential should include a careful assessment of the differences between temporary flight and permanent migration; and between internally displaced persons and cross-boundary, transcontinental [and intercontinental], migrations.

Research should be translated into policy-oriented training and dissemination programmes that bring into focus technologies and biotechnologies [which have been adapted to meet] long-term ecological and climatological constraints and other priority matters.

IN CONCLUSION

Faithful to the concept of a global environment, and aware of the crucial interactions between socio-economic factors and major environmental problems, the participants of the Almería International Symposium on Desertification and Migration are convinced that the challenge of desertification must be addressed in a comprehensive manner, taking also into account the complex issue of environmentally-related migrations.

The Symposium believes that, fundamental to the issue of desertification and migration, is the fact that many people wish to be able to have the freedom to stay at home, on their own land, in their own culture. This is particularly the case in order to provide the family with stability. The Symposium believes that the corollary of the recognized right of freedom of movement is the right to remain.

The Symposium recommends that the negotiation process of the Convention to Combat Desertification should give increased attention to the phenomenon of desertification-induced migration, at the local, regional, and global, levels.

Finally, the participants of the Almería Symposium note with pleasure that [the host-country] Spain — being itself affected by desertification and owing to its geographic location and cultural links with many affected countries in the world — is offering to contribute concretely to a more effective fight against desertification within the framework of the Convention.

[Communicated by Dr Arthur H. Westing, whose account of the Symposium was published on pages 85–6 of our preceding issue. — Ed.]

Gold Medal for International Corporate Environmental Achievement

The World Environment Center's Gold Medal for International Corporate Environmental Achievement (the 'WEC Gold Medal') was created to recognize publicly industry's environmental initiatives and contributions to global environmental quality. Acceptance of the WEC Gold Medal constitutes not only public acknowledgement of previous successes, but also an ongoing commitment on the part of the recipient to maintaining or improving environmental excellence. Recipients include: S.C. Johnson & Son, Inc.; Xerox Corporation; The Procter & Gamble Company; Rohm and Haas Company; IBM Corporation; The Dow Chemical Company; The British Petroleum Co., p.l.c.; E.I. duPont De Nemours & Co.; Exxon Company; and 3M.

Criteria for nomination include: 1) establishment and globally uniform application of an overall publicly-announced, proactive, corporate environmental policy, when dealing with all levels of management, government, non-governmental organizations, local agencies, and private citizens; 2) using science and technology to achieve maximum compatibility between environmental

protection and rehabilitation on one hand and sound economic development on the other; 3) international leadership in the environmental arena, as evidenced by: (a) extending a sense of responsibility and commitment to larger societal issues such as national development and environmental goals; (b) participating actively in programmes and projects that are designed to maintain or enhance the global environment and contribute to sustainable development; and (c) conducting employee and public environmental education and awareness programmes.

Recipients are selected by an independent, international jury of environmental experts from industry, government, and academia. The Medal is presented at a formal dinner in Washington, DC, USA, attended by senior representatives of industry, government, international and national agencies, environmental organizations, the diplomatic corps, and the media*.

ANN VENARDOS
 Manager of Corporate Programs
 World Environment Center (WEC)
 419 Park Avenue South, Suite 1800
 New York
 NY 10016, USA.

* WEC also sponsors and organizes timely workshops, one of which is described on pages 187–8 of this issue, followed by a brief account of WEC's origin and objectives. — Ed.

Francis L. Dale: A Personal Reflection

The occasion on that warm September weekend was a meeting of the World Council For The Biosphere — a rather esoteric group of senior environmental scientists from a dozen countries who pioneered concern over foreseeable environmental problems until they were taken up by *ad hoc* or other appropriate bodies — and the site was a classic Swiss hotel in the mountain hamlet of Sonloup, high above the northeastern edge of Lake Geneva. It was hardly the place where one expected to run into a former major-league baseball team president, White House appointee*, and newspaper publisher.

But Frank Dale was there as Media Adviser, listening carefully, taking notes, and commanding much attention

when he spoke in his rich baritone voice. For Ambassador Dale was not at all your 'garden' variety of sports impresario, political figure, or leading journalist — despite being all three. He was, in fact, someone deeply committed to the cause of utilizing economic, political, and communication, resources to the fullest to enhance the cause and prospects of the global environment. Upon his recent death, that cause lost a very good friend.

Frank Dale was born in Urbane, Illinois, educated at Duke and the University of Virginia, and headed major-league baseball in Cincinnati. He represented his country in Europe as a World War II USNR commanding officer and a peace-time ambassador, and always spent countless hours on airplanes. His last years were based on California and Montana (as newspaper publisher and foundation head, respectively), until he died of a heart attack while

**Inter alia* as Campaign Manager of President Nixon at his second re-election. — Ed.