

NOTES, NEWS & COMMENTS

UN Secretary-General's Message on World Environment Day

Our generation of men and women is in danger of forfeiting the future of our children. The wasting of natural resources and the contamination of air and water are reducing the options for the physically most vulnerable and politically most powerless segment of humanity — the children. The devastation of the environment is a truly global phenomenon. The United Nations has therefore chosen 'Children and the Environment' as the theme for this year's World Environment Day.

In the coming decade, more children are expected to be born than in any previous one. They will come into a world that is increasingly endangered as a result of environmental degradation, with growing risks of exposure to environment-related hazards to their health. At the same time, unless we act now, they are likely to face more and more competition for a diminishing pool of the resources that are needed for human sustenance.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes a child's right to a safe and healthy environment. It is still not too late to ensure the protection of this fundamental right.

To safeguard the future of our children we will need international action on an unprecedented scale. It is encouraging that the international community is increa-

singly aware of the unmistakable threat posed by environmental degradation. Under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and other United Nations bodies, agreements are being evolved and plans put to work to arrest the rapid depletion of the Earth's vital resources and protect its atmosphere and climate. Further, active preparations are being made for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, which will address these complex issues in a comprehensive way.

There are no quick and easy solutions to the myriad problems which the environmental crisis has thrown into sharp relief. The dangers of acidic precipitation, global warming, and soil erosion, will not vanish soon: reclaiming the Earth will have to be undertaken over decades. I therefore urge the peoples and Governments of the world to intensify their campaign to counter the threat to the global environment and to save the Earth for future generations.

JAVIER PEREZ DE CUELLAR, *Secretary-General*
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Vernadsky International Centre for Biosphere Studies

The ever-increasing negative anthropogenic pressure on our planet Earth makes urgent the utmost cooperation of efforts to analyse and evaluate the state of The Biosphere, which consists of those components of Planet Earth and its surrounding atmosphere so far down, and up, as any form of life exists naturally. Thus The Biosphere constitutes practically our entire life-support, though in the end it may give over to the noosphere, as was foreseen by V.I. Vernadsky, and may even transform Man into a *reasonable* organizer of his environment.

With the purpose of contributing to the noble task of preserving The Biosphere of our Planet, the Management of the Biological Centre of Pushchino and the Institute of Soil Science and Photosynthesis — both belonging to the USSR Academy of Sciences — have founded the Vernadsky International Centre for Biosphere Studies, the idea of which was first expressed publicly in the Declaration signed in March 1989 by seven leading participants of the International symposium 'Man and The Biosphere: History and Modern Times' (*cf. Environmental Conservation*, Vol. 16, No 3, pp. 280–2 with 3 figs, 1989).*

* We should, however, note that already on 13 March 1988, among the 'Round Table Resolutions' passed at an impressive evening 'round table meeting' in the Culture-hall of Moscow State University, there was a declaration which commented that an '[International] Vernadsky Foundation having been established with its initial complement of ten Founding Members under the aegis of the USSR Academy of Sciences on this 12th day of March 1988, being the 125th anniversary of the great thinker, we believe and hereby request should have special reference to the vast environmental implications of his concept of The Biosphere and its protection for the welfare of Mankind and Nature in perpetuity.' (quoted from *Environmental Conservation*, 15(2), p. 177, 1988). — Ed.

The main goals of the Vernadsky International Centre for Biosphere Studies are the accumulation, systematization, and dissemination, of all available knowledge about the modern state of The Biosphere, organization and coordination of investigations of The Biosphere and its components, development of recommendations of global and regional importance to be considered at both national and international levels, development of methods of exploring The Biosphere at different levels of its organization (in view of Vernadsky's doctrine of The Biosphere and noosphere), the development of ecological thought and concomitant action, and ecological education of all people.

A major task of the Centre is the promotion of interdisciplinary exchange of information on current and intended investigations of The Biosphere, together with the widest possible distribution of this information in publications and translations.

The Vernadsky International Centre for Biosphere Studies is an independent, non-profit unit carrying out its work in the form of projects. The Centre is ready to consider for support any suggestions of projects that are aimed at investigating The Biosphere, whether they are of global or merely local importance, as well as to take part in their realization. For further details please feel free to correspond directly with the undersigned.

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