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**International environment conservation**

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# International Environment Conservation

For years already environmental problems caused by speedily growing population, production and consumption in a world of limited dimensions, but also by completely new technological developments, are topics of international discussion. Events like e.g. the European "Year of Environment Protection" as arranged in 1970 or President Nixon's Message to the Congress of February 1971, in which he proposed a drastic programme for stopping the wasteful exploitation of America's natural inheritance, called the attention of the international public to the present serious situation.

To begin with, the governments were almost entirely unprepared for dealing with these problems. Reliable scientific data are frequently not available, and there is a lack of tools for measuring and analysing injuries to the environment. Nevertheless, more has already been achieved in this field than the public realises. The West European states checked their administrations responsible for environmental problems, the World Bank decided to let all development projects be examined ecologically, and President Nixon appointed a Council for Environmental Quality that is authorised to examine any technical innovations with regard to their consequences to the environment.

Now the Commission of the European Communities has submitted a programme for environmental control and protection to the Ministerial Council. Since competent representatives of the member states cooperated in the formulation of the programme, the Commission anticipates a favourable reception from the Ministerial Council, and, above all, quick actions. The programme comprises inter alia the draft of a resolution on common measures for a reduction of damages to the environment and the draft of an agreement between the EEC member states obliging them to inform the Commission on all national measures in this field. This would make a harmonisation of environment control and conservation on the Community level possible. The Commission holds the opinion that a harmonious development of economic and social activities of a state or a group of states like the EEC is not feasible anymore without considering the consequences to human welfare, living conditions and environment. Besides economic

growth other, i.e. qualitative targets should be striven for.

Here, however, is a danger that those who now regard economic growth a major evil might lapse into the same extreme as, on the other side, the fanatics on growth. A reasonable growth rate will be required also in future because only this way environment conservation can be financed. A steadily growing part of the future growth must be made available to environmental tasks at the cost of a stronger expansion of consumption. The Commission is of the opinion that those who are polluting the environment have to pay damages. On the other hand, it proposes that grants may be given to those enterprises and regions that comply with the new regulations. Since all these measures cannot be financed from business profits, noticeable price increases will be unavoidable. But just this way the necessary shifts in future growth in favour of environment conservation will come about. Mankind must adjust itself to the fact that a larger share of the future GNP growth rates will be made available to environment conservation. Everybody must bear the cost via higher prices or taxes.

The above events are encouraging openings. However, ecological problems as e.g. the balance between world population and its possible subsistence as well as genetic, meteorological and other risks are inherently solvable internationally only, because they concern mankind as a whole. Moreover, international coordination is required to avoid that different demands made in various countries lead to new obstacles to trade and distortions of competitive positions. This is why the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment to be held in Stockholm in June, 1972, is of particular importance in this connection. In December, 1968, the UN General Assembly decided to convene a conference on the human environment to provide general information on the national, regional and international level and to obtain a complete inventory on the present state of knowledge. A "General Declaration on the Human Environment" is to be formulated and adopted at this conference in order to secure that the prophecy made by Paul Valéry in the thirties — *le temps du monde fini commence* — does not come true.

*Hubert Höping*