

## U.N. WATCH

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### Peace, Please

The United Nations has a fledgling university devoted to an objective that has long eluded the 157 sovereign members of the international organization—Peace. Established two years ago, the University for Peace is the brainchild of Costa Rica, one of the smallest and least armed nations of the world.

Former Costa Rican President Rodrigo Carrazo has persuaded more than two dozen U.N. members to subscribe to the university's charter. The Government of Costa Rica has presented the school with seven hundred acres of prime forest land, and the first building has been completed. Costs are to be met by voluntary contributions from governments and nongovernmental sources; a Japanese donor has pledged \$1 million.

A university council was appointed and met early this year to discuss structure and purpose. Peering into its own backyard, the university's first concern will be human rights and the Caribbean refugee problem. This comes at an opportune time—just as President Reagan's National Bipartisan Committee on Central America, headed by Henry Kissinger, will be developing a long-term plan for the "stability" of the region.

Will the two groups talk with each other?

### Clearing the Air

Nairobi, Kenya, is the home of the U.N. Environment Programme, a busy, little-publicized U.N. affiliate. The offspring of the 1972 Stockholm Action Plan for the Human Environment, UNEP recently celebrated its tenth birthday. It was the Stockholm meeting that had so dismayed the world with its revelations of depleted resources, degradation of forests, pollution of water resources, misuse of arable land, and worldwide smog—in short, contempt for the human environment.

Like all international groups, the Stockholm Conference set forth its aims in ringing words: "To defend and improve the human environment for present and future generations has become an imperative goal for mankind—a goal to be pursued together with, and in harmony with, the established and fundamental goals of peace and of worldwide economic and social development."

The chief accomplishment of UNEP's first decade is increased public awareness of the dangers facing the environment. Environment watchers have sprung up everywhere, and one of UNEP's key projects is called "Earthwatch," an international surveillance network. The network has three components: a Global Environmental Monitoring System, which cooperates with other U.N. organizations in combatting pollution problems, renewing natural resources, and collecting related data; the International Referral System, with correspondents in more than a hundred countries; and an International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals, which records the health hazards of thousands of chemicals.

UNEP has made some progress, but the environment is not improving. Up to ten million-square kilometers of Europe and North America, an area about five times the size of Saudi Arabia, is becoming an acidic wasteland, killing

freshwater life and affecting forests. In a large part of the world trees are being destroyed faster than they are being replaced; chemical wastes produced by industry are directly threatening human health.

Addressing the governing council of UNEP this past May, at which fifty-eight nations were represented, its executive director, Dr. M. K. Tolba, a scientist from Egypt, accused countries of failing "to match fine words with deeds." Protecting the environment is seen in isolation, in spite of the obvious connections with political and economic stability. After 105 nations agreed to support a Global Environment Program a year ago, the UNEP budget for 1984-85 was reduced. Says Dr. Tolba: "We are dealing with a shrinking program. I'm convinced that we...spend too much time talking to ourselves."

There are some encouraging developments, however. On the local level, there is rising concern about the environment. Nongovernmental groups are becoming more active in soil conservation and forest preservation. Canada has offered to fund an Environment Commission, supporting (but independent of) UNEP, which would seek greater international cooperation and deal particularly with the critical problems of the developing countries. The General Assembly will be asked to ratify it.

Like other policy-makers who struggle with basic human concerns and shrinking budgets, Dr. Tolba connects his program's problems with the arms race: "If nations were prepared to deflect even a small part of the \$1.2 million they spend every minute on the arms race to safeguarding the environment, we could halt the wasting of this planet's resource base."

### Special Attention

Various units of the U.N. spend an inordinate amount of time scrutinizing the activities of one of the smallest nations in the world—Israel. The latest is the Special Committee Against Apartheid.

Its chairman, a Nigerian, recently announced that one of the committee's most important projects for 1983 is an international conference on the "alliance" between Israel and South Africa, to be held this summer at the Vienna center of the United Nations. He noted that his committee has repeatedly called the General Assembly's attention to the collaboration, "which has come to present a serious challenge to the United Nations."

### Still Floating

There will be no meeting in 1983 of the U.N. Conference for the Promotion of International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy. The Preparatory Committee, which met in New York City a while back, could not agree on an agenda, rules of procedure, or even the form of conference documentation. Three earlier meetings in Vienna were marked by similar problems. There are sixty-five states on the Preparatory Committee, including all the nuclear powers.

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