

# EX TROPICIS



ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

*Spot News*

March 12 to 20, 1992

## ENVIRONMENT

### Prince Philip pays an ecological visit to Brazil

The president of the WWF (The Worldwide Fund for Nature), Prince Philip of Great Britain, arrived in Manaus, the capital of the state of Amazonas, on March 15. He had a full agenda that began with a boat trip up the Rio Negro. Prince Philip also went to the Anavilhanas Archipelago Ecological Station, a 150-kilometer long stretch of islands 50 kilometers from Manaus. The channels between these islands are the habitat of fresh water dolphins, caimans, manatee and the islands are home to flocks of various species of parrots.

The governor of Amazonas was pleasantly surprised when his guest, the Prince, invited him to join the WWF. The organization has 50,000 members and has spent over US\$ 500 million on conservation programs.

Despite heavy rain in Sao Paulo, the second stop on his trip, Prince Philip insisted on visiting the city's botanical gardens with its 2,500 species of Brazilian orchids. He also gave a speech at the Sao Paulo Industries Federation where he spoke out against illegal hunting of endangered species in the Amazon, pointing out that many are exported abroad. Ironically, Britain is one of the main destinations of smuggled exotic pets from Brazil and other developing countries.

Before leaving for home last Wednesday, Prince Philip took part in a nature conservation seminar held at the British Consulate in the federal capital of Brasília. He also took time out to visit the Vatafogo Ecological Sanctuary 160 kilometers from the capital. This reserve is scrubland, considered the second most important ecosystem in the country after the Amazon rain forest. In this scrubland, there is the largest concentration of endemic species of South American fauna.

## PESTICIDES

### **Farm workers died in the state of Paraná**

Last year in the southwest state of Paraná, 101 farm laborers died and 1,187 were poisoned by toxic pesticides long since banned in industrialized nations. Pesticides such as 24-D that are carcinogenic are still being marketed in developing countries to use up stock which can not be sold anymore in the developed nations. The state registered 97 such deaths and 1,137 cases of pesticide intoxication in 1990.

Farm workers are given little if any protective gear to use while spraying these lethal chemical compounds. The law does not require measures like these. Industries are not required to dispose of pesticide packaging in safe manners. The chemicals from haphazardly-dumped packaging filter into the soil and are a serious threat to the water table in agricultural regions.

## UNCED

### **Norwegian Prime Minister concerned about Rio conference**

Gro Harlem Brundtland, one of the heads of state who is most outspoken on environmental issues, paid a visit to Brazil last week. She came to Rio de Janeiro to discuss topics that relate to the UNCED conference in June.

Prime Minister Brundtland stated that it is of utmost importance to get the U.S. to change its opinions on limiting toxic gas emissions during the next three months so that UNCED has a chance of being a success. She stressed that to accomplish sustainable development in the world, the developed countries will have to offer substantial financial and technological resources.

The Norwegian Prime Minister met in Brasília with President Fernando Collor and they drew up a communiqué which stressed that more funds are necessary for sustainable growth. Brundtland said that Norway is extremely concerned about the financial resources issue that so many developed countries have been complaining about during Precon IV, the UNCED preparatory meeting being held in New York.

The U.N. has forecast that an annual US\$ 125 billion until the year 2000 will be needed to ensure sustainable growth in the developing world. Brundtland said that if all developed countries contributed merely 1.1% of their GDP, this figure would be more than enough to meet the needs.

Later in the week, she met with the governor of Amazonas and planted a tree in Manaus in a park that will be opened when a replica of a Viking ship, the *Gaia*, arrives in the city. After leaving Norway, the craft sailed to Cuba, the U.S., and will arrive in Rio in time for UNCED.

## POLITICS

### Bush worries about electoral greening, not global warming

The White House has started to encourage U.S. President Bush to go to UNCED. He has still not decided if he will attend the conference. His re-election campaign staff told a major U.S. TV network, ABC, that the "last thing Bush needs is to be a loser at the Rio conference during an election year." UNCED general secretary Maurice Strong has received the news that he will perhaps change course due to election concerns. There is even a new U.S. advertising campaign on TV telling the nation, "the human race is in danger."

International pressure may even make the Precon IV talks flow a bit more smoothly. An UNCED spokesperson stated that last week's talks in New York revealed a more cooperative U.S. with respect to limiting toxic gas emissions by the year 2000. Worldwatch Institute of Washington D.C. is still worried that countries will not honor the accords they sign at the conference. The respected organization is recommending that trade sanctions be used to punish nations that fail to keep their promises made at UNCED.

Hilary French, the author of a study done by Worldwatch, suggests that an international court, like the Hague, be founded to provide legal and other support for environmental organizations. She observes in her study that developing nations would prefer that financial resources resulting from accords at UNCED not be linked to the World Bank, which is "in the hands of the industrialized countries."