

# EX TROPICIS



ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

*Spot News*

February 27 to march 05, 1992

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## CHICO MENDES

### Convict will have new trial

On February 28, the Acre State Court declared the trial of Darly Alves da Silva annulled due to "insufficient evidence." Silva was sentenced in December 1990 to 19 years in prison for the murder of the ecologist and union leader Chico Mendes. Darly was convicted of the murder by a jury of his peers in the tiny Acre town of Xapuri. The prosecution will appeal to the Supreme Court to maintain the validity of the trial and sentence. Darly's son, Darci, will serve out his sentence for first-degree murder.

The news of another trial shocked environmentalists in the U.S. and other countries. This new turn could further jeopardize Brazil's tarnished human rights image at a time when the country is about to host the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED 92) in Rio de Janeiro.

Stephen Schwartzman, a prominent U.S. anthropologist who works with the Environmental Defense Fund, is concerned about the safety of Osmarino Amâncio Rodrigues, Raimundo de Barros and Gumercindo Rodrigues, who took on the leadership of Acre's rubber tappers upon Chico Mendes' death. Barbara Bramble, director of the National Wildlife Federation, declared that Brazilian authorities must not set Darly free.

Brazilian anthropologist Mary Alegretti believes that the trial issue is reason enough to boycott UNCED. She stated that if the Supreme Court does not overrule the State Court decision, Brazilian and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will have no desire to participate in such a conference held in Brazil.

## UNCED 92

### Preparatory conference for UNCED already underway in NYC

Delagations from scores of developed and developing countries are in New York for the next five weeks to attend the last of four UNCED preparatory meetings, the first of which was held in Nairobi in 1990. The countries are deciding on the issues to be dealt with in the Earth Charter.

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The Charter will be a document that will set out the international principles that are to govern the next century's economic development and the preservation of what is left of the planet's environment.

"The objective is to mobilize countries' political goodwill and begin a series of concrete actions to correct the imbalance in the world's ecology and economy," said Maurice Strong, general secretary for Unced.

This last round of talks began on March 1. The participants are divided into three large work groups and they are discussing a wide variety of topics included in what is called "Agenda 21", the agenda for the 21st century. The issues range from preservation of wildlife, forests and oceans to toxic waste and transfer of technology.

Besides the Earth Charter, there are two more agreements that will be signed at UNCED in June. One deals with the effects of climactic changes and the greenhouse effect. The other covers biodiversity on the planet.

Maurice Strong has estimated that industrialized nations will have to contribute an annual US\$ 125 billion conditional on the developing nations using these funds to promote economic policies which encourage sustainable growth. Strong remarked that forest conservation alone would call for funds to the tune of US\$ 32 million a year.

This amount of US\$ 125 billion includes the US\$ 55 billion already available in funds earmarked for development assistance. "The matter of financing is crucial to the success of UNCED," stated Strong. "Due to budget problems in most of the industrialized countries, it is unrealistic at this time to expect that governments take on commitments of this magnitude."

The general secretary stressed, however, that this US\$ 125 billion is only a fourth or a fifth of what that the developing countries will have to spend of their own resources to achieve development that does not threaten the environment. "The contribution is quite modest when compared to what developed nations spend on military security. This sum is usually some US\$ 1 trillion per year and is less than 1% of these countries' GDP. It is also far lower than the billions of dollars they spend today on agricultural subsidies, for example. These programs are often a waste of money and frequently carried out in ways that harm the environment," Strong added.

The two and a half years of meetings have not met with much success. A mere 48 hours after the opening of this final New York round, the talks have reached an impasse. Under pressure from developing countries and also from Europe, the U.S. government made an attempt at conciliation on the issue of ecologically sound economic growth in the 21st century, but ended up backing out and leaving the negotiations at a standstill.



Pakistan's representative, Jamsheed Marker, brought forth a proposal in the name of the "Group of 77", a takeoff on the "Group of 7" superpowers. The Group of 77 is the new name for the 77 developing nations. Marker suggested that a fund be created specifically for the transfer of money, similar to the Global Fund for the Environment set up within the World Bank. The 77 countries would only have access to these financial resources if they were going to use them to finance, according to their domestic priorities, projects in keeping with the principles laid down in Agenda 21.

Delegates from all over the world applauded what they perceived to be a flexible and workable proposal. "I do not see what is flexible about it," grumbled the head of the U.S. delegation, Bohlen Buff. Buff thought the program was "unrealistic" and complained that developing nations were getting too tough.

## MEDICINE

### Germany and Brazil cooperate to treat malaria with plants

The Federal University of Minas Gerais State is carrying out a unique experiment using native plant species to treat malaria. The results obtained so far are encouraging: of the 22 plants studied, 18% of have proven to be effective treatment. Experiments have shown that "Tachia guianensis", "Esenbeckia febrifuga" and "Lisianthus speciosus" from the Amazon and "Acanthospermum australe" from Minas Gerais have reduced malaria symptoms in guinea pigs. The University of Munich and Brazil's Oswaldo Cruz Foundation are collaborating on the project.

## ENVIRONMENT

### World Bank approves funding for reservoir revamping

On February 28, the World Bank mission gave the go ahead to a US\$ 228 million project to turn the 630-square-kilometer Guarapiranga dam in the city of São Paulo into a model reservoir. The World Bank contribution will amount to US\$ 107 million, while the federal, state and municipal governments will make up the rest. The reservoir will become a park and the area will be reforested with species from the Coastal rain forest.