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OF THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

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ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND HUMAN
ENVIRONMENT FAO

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FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Activities in the Field of Natural Resources and Human Environment

1. Since its establishment, FAO has been deeply involved in a very broad range of subjects concerned with the protection, rational utilization and improvement of the physical and biological natural resources in the rural and aquatic sectors of the human environment. The FAO participates closely in activities aiming at the fullest development of these resources through the best allocation and regulation of their use between agriculture and other sectors of the economy, consistent with conservation aspects in order to ensure their purity and continuous productive use.

2. An Inter-Departmental Working Group on Natural Resources and the Human Environment has been appointed by the Director-General of FAO in December 1969 to advise him on the overall policy of the Organization in this field and also to act as focal point of all the FAO contributions to the UN Conference of Stockholm.

3. Ad Hoc Study Groups have been established in FAO on specific topics for the background documentation of the UN Stockholm Conference. These Groups have already prepared detailed proposals for this documentation and also for action programmes related to these subjects.

4. The activities described below encompass the management and conservation of land resources, water resources, forestry and wildlife, plant resources, animal resources and fisheries, and their related legal, institutional aspects. In most cases, these activities include four components:

- (i) the preparation of guidelines, handbooks and manuals of standards;
- (ii) the organization of seminars, working parties, and training courses at national, regional and international levels;
- (iii) the implementation, at the request of and in collaboration with member governments, of field programmes of surveys, research and experimentation, resources development planning and management, institution building, and training;
- (iv) the elaboration of international standards and of regional and international conventions for environmental controls and the establishment of the regional institutions required in this respect.

5. Since most of the activities of the Organization are directly or indirectly related to natural resources use and the human environment, it is difficult to give an accurate estimate of the amount of funds actually spent on environmental affairs. Recent assessments indicate a figure of the order of US\$38,000,000 for the years 1970 and 1971: \$3,000,000 in the Regular Programme Budget, and \$35,000,000 from extra-budgetary funds, especially those for field activities.

More detailed figures are indicated below for those parts of FAO's programmes which are entirely in the field of the environment.

Water Development, management and conservation

6. It is part of FAO's work to assist Governments in the better planning of water development and use to avoid harmful side effects, to abate them if they exist, to prevent them from arising in the future, and to keep under permanent review the related problems. This is accomplished through a very large number of field projects operated by FAO under UNDP and other sources of finance. Because of the strong intersectoral nature of water use and water quality management, FAO's work includes cooperation with other United Nations bodies and international organizations active in connexion with water use.

7. The FAO also assists Member States by organizing seminars and training centres, among which the Seminar on Waterlogging in relation to Irrigation and Salinity Problems (Lahore, 1964) and the Land and Water Use Seminar for the Near East (Beirut, 1967) should be mentioned. A similarly oriented seminar for Near East countries was held in Baghdad in 1970 on the topic of reducing the damage done to the environment through salinisation, under the title of "Methods for the Amelioration of Waterlogged and Saline Soils". In the proposed programme of work for 1972/73, FAO plans to hold a number of meetings with direct relevance to resource conservation. These meetings include the "Working Group of the International Hydrological Decade on the Influence of Man on the Hydrological Cycle" and the "Consultation on Pollution and Environmental Quality Control", to be held in 1973.

Land development and soil conservation

8. The FAO helps countries to assess the use capability of soil resources, assists in building up land use plans which will permit an optimal use and management of these resources without soil deterioration, and is active in helping member nations to develop the full productive potential of land resources by improvement in structures and methods of use which at the same time will help not only to preserve but also to improve this potential. FAO is developing a computerized data system which will match fertilizer and herbicide application to soil properties for rational use and the prevention of pollution. A specific type of pollution that under certain circumstances could present a hazard is that arising from radioactive contamination, which is of greater potential significance in soils poor in calcium content. FAO has been studying this question incidentally in connexion with the preparation of the Soil Map of the World, which will show the world distribution of soils well supplied with calcium.

9. It is of concern to FAO that some of the most productive soils are being lost to agriculture as the urbanization and industrialization of both developing and developed countries proceeds. Through its European Forestry and Agriculture Commissions, FAO is active in assisting Member States in their efforts to preserve good agricultural and forest lands and decrease encroachment by other land user categories. This is done through land use planning to indicate the desirable direction and speed of change in land use to meet specific policy objectives.

10. In the Latin American Region in 1970, FAO has held a meeting on "Soil and Water Conservation" which has focussed attention on these problems in the Region and helped to disseminate knowledge about the methods by which it can be combatted.

11. In addition to cultural and structural practices for preventing soil erosion by wind and water, provision of productive cover for soils, especially in the form of forest cover, is one of the readiest means to stop their movement. FAO has issued a number of publications dealing with this matter such as Soil conservation - an international study (1946), and Guide to sixty soil and water conservation practices. Symposia and conferences are also held under the auspices of FAO on the subject of soil conservation. The publication proposals for 1972/73 also include publications on Methods on erosion control and Soil pollution.

12. The introduction of programme budgeting for planning FAO's programme of work has enabled the identification in approximate terms of the resources which are spent explicitly for activities closely related to the conservation of the human environment. Within the programme of "Conservation of Environment and Natural Resources" a total of \$176,764 is proposed to be spent on a sub-programme on "Soil and Water Conservation". Together with monies proposed to be spent on related activities listed under other sub-programmes, within the land and water development field it may be estimated that a total of \$200,000 is proposed to be used for programmes aimed at solving the problems of the human environment. The sub-programme itself includes the full-time equivalent of approximately 4 professional man-years, two meetings and publications. FAO's field activities in the soil and water related environmental problems are represented by 15 UNDP/SF projects and 25 individual experts, the total cost of which amounts to \$978,400 per annum.

The conservation and development of plant resources

13. Plants are of primary importance as sources of food for man and his livestock, as well as providing directly or indirectly many of the materials used by him to modify his environment and to extend and enlarge the nature and quality of his existence. By drawing upon his plant resources, man has established himself in habitats of every extreme. This exploration has led to the creation of a vast array of varieties of plants adapted to a wide range of natural and man-made environments, where they provide man's staple foods, oils, fibres, fruits, timber and fuel, as well as grazing and forage for his livestock. FAO is actively assisting in the further breeding of improved varieties of all these different kinds of plants with higher yield and better quality. On the other hand, the extensive cultivation of improved varieties is also leading to the disappearance of primitive forms and earlier varieties which may be needed in the future for further advances of the same sort under changing

conditions. FAO is therefore also encouraging national and international action to conserve such plant genetic resources so that they are not totally lost:

(i) In this connection, FAO is now carrying out a world survey of crop genetic resources in collections and in the field with the active cooperation of IBP, Research Institutes, Foundations and individual scientists.

(ii) FAO is also participating in the preparation of inventories of existing crop genetic material in collections, on the basis of this survey, and in the field through a joint FAO/IBP Trust Fund.

(iii) FAO and the FAO/IAEA Joint Division are participating together in the promotion of internationally standardized systems of data and information recording storage and analysis suitable for computer processing.

(iv) On the basis of this collaboration, a Genetic Information Centre has been established, through which the characteristics and location of genetic resources will be made available to all who may employ them for the continued varietal improvement of cultivated plants.

(v) Much material relating to these activities is disseminated through the Plant Introduction Newsletter.

(vi) In addition, through the direct participation of FAO Headquarters members on international and regional committees, in working groups, and other consultative bodies, the closest contact is being maintained with all major organizations and all governments involved in the work of genetic conservation, and their close coordination in genetic conservation at an international level ensured.

(vii) The FAO is also conducting a seed and plant materials exchange service, which makes available throughout the world, plant material needed for genetic improvement programmes conducted by governments, research institutes and UN development projects. This work is conducted in close association with the Genetic Information Centre and is linked with the preparation of plant resources inventories mentioned above (para ii).

(viii) In view of the equal importance in genetic conservation programmes of maintaining seed and plant collections under optimum conditions in adequately equipped centres, FAO is promoting international action for the establishment of national and regional genetic conservation centres, or "gene banks", and has provided assistance to Member Nations in the creation of plant introduction services, genetic conservation centres and crop improvement services based on the maximum employment of the genetic potential of available plant resources.

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(ix) Crop ecological studies are being produced, in order to define environment potentials in terms of crop requirements, and to provide the basic elements in agricultural planning and diversification.

(x) In the field of exploration of plant genetic resources, FAO is involved in defining, on the basis of expert field intelligence, crop and regional exploration priorities.

(xi) FAO is also providing assistance to specialists and to local institutions for the collection of genetic material in areas of special interest or priority, and in the case of especially threatened plant species.

(xii) FAO is strengthening exploration activities by promoting cooperation in field missions, by providing expertise and advice, and by participating directly where necessary in areas where a special need for emergency intervention against genetic erosion exists.

(xiii) In the educational field, FAO participates in national, regional and international conferences and meetings, and provides lecturers for specialist post-graduate courses in genetic conservation and exploration.

This work is undertaken by a Unit of four professional officers supported by 6 technical workers. The annual budget for the Unit is estimated at \$177,500 (crop ecology: \$37,500; genetic resources: \$103,800; plant introduction: \$36,000).

14. FAO work on grazing lands in relation to environmental problems includes the following:

- (a) Integrated evaluation of the extent, nature, present use and productive potentials of grazing resources to provide the basic, quantitative information needed for their rational management and preservation.
- (b) Improving rangelands through revegetation, water spreading, grazing management and other practices designed to reduce soil erosion and damage to vegetation resources.
- (c) Studies of traditional grazing systems, particularly nomadic grazing, to develop effective ways of improving these systems and modify the present destructive use of rangelands.
- (d) Introducing and evaluating forage plants for difficult environments for soil maintenance and increased animal production. Legume forage plants are particularly important in this regard and information on this plant group for both tropical and temperate environments is published as it becomes available.

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- (e) Assisting member states in range management through the development of suitable institutions for the administration of grassland resources, including research and training experts.

Programmes on grazing lands are operated by four Headquarters officers with a budget of approximately \$250,000 for the 1970/71 biennium.

15. FAO is engaged in many activities to protect crop resources from the ravages of pests and diseases of various kinds. These include bacteria, viruses, fungi, nematodes, insects, rodents and birds. In connexion with the strengthening of intergovernmental cooperation in measures for controlling destructive pests and diseases and for preventing their spread, special mention may be made of the International Plant Protection Convention, which has been signed by thirty-seven governments and adhered to by a number of others and under which a network of regional plant protection organizations has been established.

16. In order to increase the efficiency of control measures and to reduce the possible hazardous effects, FAO promotes the study of integrated pest control techniques and encourages their application in developing areas. Such techniques are designed to apply compatible methods in combination to obtain more lasting and more economic control and to reduce the use of toxic materials.

17. The FAO has an extensive programme designed to ensure safe and effective use of pesticides, with due consideration being given to the adverse effects of these compounds upon consumers and beneficial forms of life. This programme aims, inter alia, at reducing the excessive and uncontrolled use of biocides:

- (i) The FAO Committee of Experts on the Use of Pesticides in Agriculture, which is composed of a small group of well-known specialists, is concerned with all aspects of the safe and efficient use of agricultural pesticides, including effects of pesticide application on environments.

- (ii) In collaboration with WHO, the FAO Working Party of Experts on Pesticide Residues periodically reviews information on the toxicological aspects and agricultural application of pesticides and recommends for international adoption the acceptable daily intake and residue tolerance limits of commonly used pesticides.

- (iii) FAO operates a small-scale Pesticide Information Service, including information on pesticides in relation to environmental contamination.

- (iv) FAO is responsible for three UNDP-assisted projects on pesticide research in Brazil, Poland and UAR. The research programmes of all three projects include effects of pesticide application on environments. A publication entitled Guidelines for the drafting of legislation for the registration for marketing and sale of pesticides and a series of monographs on pesticides dealing with toxicological and agricultural aspects have been issued.

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The FAO Pesticide Programme is operated by three Headquarters officers, supported by a large number of experts serving in personal capacity on FAO statutory bodies (4). The Headquarter's budget is approximately \$300,000 for the 1970/71 biennium.

The conservation and development of forest and wildlife resources

18. The establishment or maintenance and the protection of forests is often one of man's best tools for creating a stable and productive plant environment. In 1951, the sixth FAO Conference, recognizing that forests influence the general welfare of both rural and urban people, approved "Principles of forest policy" which were recommended for the attention of all Member States. As a result, regional forestry commissions have been established to promote and coordinate sound and improved forest policies in all major regions. Through publications and seminars, through field experts in forest departments, and by providing assistance in training at universities and ranger schools, FAO endeavours to promote sound silvicultural practices in many developing countries. This includes the establishment of forest plantations, man-made ecosystems requiring particular safeguards. A panel of experts on forest gene resources was established to help and coordinate FAO's efforts to explore, utilize and conserve the gene resources of forest trees.

19. Recognizing the role of forests as a stabilizing factor of the human environment, FAO has organized seminars, training centres and tours to study the use of plantations for the fixation of sand-dunes and heathlands, for the stabilization of soil on sloping ground and the plugging of gully erosion. Forests have been established as regulators of streamflow, as green areas around cities, and as shelterbelts. On the other hand, many forests require protection from biotic agencies (including human beings) and abiotic ones such as fire. Fires change the environment drastically over millions of hectares every year and without fire control systems, fire incidence would increase because of more human presence in the forests. FAO has organized several study tours on forest fire control and is planning one for 1972/73.

20. FAO has issued several publications and held meetings concerned with the multiple use of forests, including the more and more important role of forests for recreational purposes, but also for grazing, etc. Shifting cultivation has been studied in Africa, the Far East and Latin America. Watershed management figures in both regular and field programmes. An applied forest watershed management handbook is under preparation and watershed management seminars are being held. Other concerns are national parks in Africa, Latin America and the Far East; and, in cooperation with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the Africa Special Project made it possible to identify problems in twenty African countries and plan technical assistance. Working

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parties on wildlife management and national parks have also been set up in the regional forestry commissions in Africa, Latin America and the Far East.

21. In general, the proper management of the forest resources, in the framework of an agreed policy, is a major concern of FAO, and the FAO European Forestry Commission is maintaining a Working Party on Forest Management. Depending on the local circumstances, emphasis in management will be on the production of timber and other products, or on protective or other functions. When large industries draw their raw material from the forests, management is concerned that the resource will sustain the production in continuity, without negatively influencing the environment. The industrial plants, in addition, are faced with pollution problems, typically e.g. the effluent problem of pulp and paper industries. It is technically possible to reduce or perhaps eliminate this pollution, but it raises the question of how far it is possible to go economically.

22. National Parks and Wildlife Management
(1970/71 budget: \$1,058,998)

The purpose of this sub-programme is to provide assistance to member countries in assessing and developing wildlife and recreational values of forests and wildlands and in developing national parks.

The main activities of this sub-programme during the current biennium are the preparation of a handbook on wildlife management techniques, designed to be used in developing countries at the medium and professional level, publication of a bibliography on wildlife management for the African region, establishing an appropriate methodology for determining recreational needs in member nations and for assessing recreational potential, and organizing a Working Party on National Parks and Wildlife in Latin America to review research, training and development needs in the Latin American region.

The main characteristics of the activities proposed for 1972/73 are holding a technical consultation of experts on national parks and wildlife management and related environmental quality problems to assist with re-assessment of priorities in these rapidly developing fields, to provide information on wildlife utilization and management techniques and to promote regional coordination of national policies in the field of wildlife and national parks and of international cooperative action.

23. Forest and Wildlife Conservation
(1970/71 budget: \$1,990,297)

The purpose of this sub-programme is to provide assistance in (i) the development of watershed and hydrological values of forests and forest lands; (ii) the use of marginal lands; and (iii) the conservation of soil resources, fauna and flora.

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The main activities of this sub-programme during the current biennium are the organization of an International Conference on Forest Influences in the USSR (Aug-Sept. 1970); the organization of the ninth session of the EFC Working Party on Torrent Control, Protection from Avalanches, and Watershed Management (June 1970); conducting, in Latin America, a Watershed Management Training Centre to review with foresters and hydrologists new scientific developments as related to local watershed problems.

The main characteristics of the activities proposed for 1972/73 include an analysis of the feasibility of developing a large-scale international project or network of projects directed at stabilizing the marginal lands of the world (to be developed eventually into a major FAO programme); to conduct studies leading to a publication on the use of fire in modifying and managing environments, on the role of introduced species in the functioning and stability of marginal systems of land use (both to be in collaboration with UNESCO and IUCN); and the publication of a handbook on applied forest watershed management for use in teaching and day-to-day guidance for watershed management technicians in the field.

The conservation and development of animal resources

24. The influence on the biology of man exerted by the livestock which share his environment can be profound. The task of FAO in the field of livestock production is not necessarily to increase the total numbers of animals but rather to improve the quality, productivity and health of the world's herds and flocks.

25. There has been a long-standing agreement between FAO and l'Office International des Epizooties, in Paris, on all matters of quarantine. Close liaison exists with WHO on matters of common interest in the field of zoonoses - diseases which are common to and intercommunicable between man and animals and exact a heavy toll on both of them.

26. The FAO has long been encouraging the breeding of livestock better adapted to prevailing environments in various parts of the world and the conservation and use of animal genetic resources which are currently neglected. In areas marginal to conventional forms of pastoralism attention is being directed to the need for the wise conservation and use of wild game which can provide an environmental resource of considerable importance.

27. The FAO also concerns itself, in particular through its joint FAO/IAEA Division, with the problems of the accumulation of radioactive fall-out in the food chain, as a result of which certain foods, including animal products, may become unsuitable for human consumption. Similar problems arise with the accumulation, in animal products, of certain pesticides used against plant pests; these problems are dealt with in cooperation with the relevant FAO/WHO Expert Committee.

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Problems of the environment relating to fisheries

28. The FAO is also much concerned with the effects of inland water and marine pollution on the development of fisheries resources. In connexion with inland water pollution, FAO is undertaking studies on water quality criteria for fish, in some cases through its regional fisheries councils and commissions, as well as on pesticides and pollution, on pulp and paper mill effluents, and on the use of sewage effluents for agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

29. With respect to marine pollution, the initiative to develop a concerted interagency programme was taken several years ago through the ACC Sub-Committee on Marine Science and its Applications. This followed requests by some Member States for an active programme with respect to problems of increasing concern in some areas, and general consideration of these problems by FAO Advisory Committee on Marine Resources Research. FAO, UNESCO, WMO and IMCO have now established a joint group of experts on the scientific aspects of marine pollution, which met in Paris in March 1970. It advised on the development of an information system (including storage, retrieval and exchange) on marine pollution and its effects; on the needs for scientific research on various problems associated with marine pollution, including chemical methods of dispersing, precipitating and removing pollutants (including oil) from the sea; on research priorities with a view to facilitating international action for control of major categories of marine pollution; on the organization of on-the-spot investigations and advice in the event of major pollution accidents; on the question of determination of permissible concentrations of certain pollutants; and on arrangements for the FAO Technical Conference on Marine Pollution and its Effects on Living Resources and Fishing, held in Rome in December 1970, and which it regarded as an important preparatory step for the United Nations Conference on the Problems of the Human Environment planned for 1972. The joint group also advised on aspects of pollution and other harmful effects arising from exploration and exploitation of the seabed beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, as specified in United Nations General Assembly resolutions 2414 (XXIII) and 2467 (XXIII) B; FAO will bring the question of how the Secretary-General's forthcoming study of these matters is to be prepared, and especially how the necessary inter-agency cooperation is to be achieved, for consideration by the ACC Sub-committee on Marine Science.

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30. During the forthcoming biennium 1972/73, FAO's activities in the field of aquatic environment improvement and pollution control will increase to meet the needs of the member governments and field projects in this area. Environment protection, major conservancy and ecological studies will be an integral part of the activities and the output thus obtained from such activities will be channelled for eventual resource development projects.

31. FAO will endeavour to carry out the increased programmed activities through consultants and contract funds and by mobilizing the competence available in various inter-governmental scientific organizations, as well as by obtaining support from agencies like SIDA, NORAD, etc.

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Problems of the environment relating to food

32. Food is easily affected by the environment in which it is produced and also by the cultural practices and techniques of production employed. Even every small amounts of contaminants may have long-term adverse effects on human health. FAO has been intimately involved with the problems of food contamination and measures to check and control them. Thus it has been giving assistance in the field of food control, i.e. advising on national food legislation, assisting in the setting up of food control laboratories, training of food inspectors, laboratory technicians, etc., and advising on development of national food standards. This is a long-term programme which needs lots of resources for development of appropriate organizational and institutional systems at national levels. FAO has published "Basic Principles of Food Legislation" as well as a "Study of the General Principles of Food Legislation". It has also held a Seminar on Food Legislation and Food Control in Bangkok.

33. FAO along with WHO is involved in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission to set up food standards at an international level. These standards have special provisions for food additives, contaminants, pesticide residues, etc. The Commission works through a large number of governmental committees of which the ones on food hygiene, food additives and pesticide residues are specially important for the subjects to be discussed at Stockholm. Reports of the Commission and its various committees are published for the use of member governments. One of the main objectives of the work of the Commission is to facilitate international trade in foods protecting the consumer interests.

34. The Organization jointly with WHO has set up two expert committees each in the fields of pesticides and food additives - both intentional and unintentional additives. These committees meet once every year for toxicological evaluation of pesticides, food additives and contaminants and recommend their acceptable daily intakes for man. They also lay down the specifications for food additives and their methods of analysis, etc. The reports of the two committees which are published have important bearing on the environmental problems as well as on problems relating to the production and marketing of food.

Institutional aspects of resource conservation and development

35. FAO's role as a centre of dissemination of agricultural research data will be enhanced by the development of the Computer Agricultural Research Information System (CARIS). FAO takes a lead in the organization of cooperative agricultural research on the basis of ecological zones.

36. In response to the increasing awareness of developing countries that major bottlenecks to development frequently lie in deficiencies of organization, administration and management, FAO is assisting in advice on improvements in these fields and in training of officials of all grades in the planning and execution of development programmes and projects, including an increasing element of conservation of resources and amelioration of the environment.

37. FAO gives assistance to Member Countries in training of farmers, rural youth and extension workers, including such conservation aspects as soil and water conservation, proper use of fertilizers and insecticides, control of fires and control of grazing.

38. All FAO's work with agrarian reform has a bearing on the human environment. In particular, the establishment of rural settlements has a profound effect on the local environment, and care is taken that deterioration is prevented.

39. Amelioration of the environment cannot be achieved by legislation and coercion alone. It is necessary, through sociological studies, to understand the viewpoints of the people involved and, by teaching and demonstration to induce them to accept and support the changes. Many of the general activities of FAO in the fields of education and training, including rural youth, rural sociology and general public information, are of prime importance for a better understanding, knowledge and conservation of natural resources and the environment, and especially for the better involvement and participation of the public.

Legal aspects of resource conservation and development

40. The activities of FAO include:

- (a) Collection, translation and dissemination of legislative texts relating to land, water, wildlife, forest and fisheries conservation;
- (b) Preparation of comparative legal studies and working papers on these subjects, including regional area surveys of legislation on land tenure and agrarian reform (Africa, Latin America), water laws and water pollution control (Europe, Africa), wildlife conservation laws (Latin America, Asia) and food legislation (Southeast Asia);
- (c) Technical assistance by legal experts for the drafting of national legislation on resource conservation, in connection with FAO development projects or upon specific request by Member States (legislative advisory services for fifteen projects currently under way, including legislation for water management, soil conservation, forestry, fisheries, wildlife and national parks, and quarantine legislation for animal and plant products);
- (d) Legal advisory services for the multi-purpose development of international drainage basins (e.g. drafting assistance to the Lake Chad Basin Commission regarding regulations for wildlife, fisheries conservation and water apportionment), and for several international fisheries commissions;

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- (e) Cooperation with other agencies and non-governmental organizations (WHO, IMCO, Council of Europe, IUCN, International Law Association, International Association for Water Law, World Peace Through Law Center), for the elaboration of international legal instruments and standards to protect environmental resources (e.g. the joint FAO/WHO "Guidelines for the drafting of legislation for the registration, marketing and sale of pesticides", and the Codex Alimentarius).

41. Further to the continuing work of FAO's legal staff on these subjects, a legal officer has been released from other responsibilities for work on legal aspects of the human environment, especially in view of preparations for the Stockholm Conference. Several special studies are currently under preparation, including a review of existing legal constraints affecting resource utilization; institutional and legal aspects of inland and maritime water pollution control; international legal machinery for resource conservation; and a comparative study of environmental protection laws and institutions.

FAO concern in international and regional agreements relating to problems of the human environment

42. The FAO is involved in a number of other important aspects of international action relating to the human environment. Its responsibilities for a number of international conventions and agreements already in operation include, for example, Agreements on Fisheries Councils in the Indo-Pacific and Mediterranean regions (1948 and 1949 respectively), Commissions for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Near East and in South-West Asia, a Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease in Europe, an Intergovernmental Agreement for the Control of African Horse Sickness in the Near East region, and the International Plant Protection Convention and its network of related regional plant protection agreements. A convention under the auspices of FAO for the establishment of an international commission for the conservation of atlantic tunas came into force in March 1969, and a convention on the conservation of the living resources of the Southeast Atlantic was adopted in October 1969. FAO also has a substantial concern in existing conventions and agreements for which other agencies are responsible, including, for example, the United Nations Conventions on Fishing and Conservation of the Living Resources of the High Seas (1958), on the United Nations Prevention of Pollution of the Sea by Oil (1954) and on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources in Africa (IUCN/OAU, 1969).

43. Besides the above-mentioned information activities (technical publications, seminars, etc.), the Organization through its Information Division has undertaken more general information activities on FAO's environmental concerns and its related field programmes, through the publication of articles in influential newspapers and magazines, and the preparation of a book on this subject aimed at a wide general public.