

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON HERBICIDES AND DEFOLIANTS
IN WAR: THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS ON MAN AND NATURE
Ho Chi Minh City, 13-20 January 1983

FINAL SUMMARY REPORT OF THE SYMPOSIUM

The "International Symposium on herbicides and defoliants in war: the long-term effects on man and nature" was held in Ho Chi Minh City from 13 to 20 January 1983.

Attending the symposium were more than 160 scientists and experts from 21 countries as well as Observers from FAO, UNEP and UNESCO. The symposium discussed the long-term effects of herbicides and defoliants used by the United States army forces together with the agreement of the Saigon administration on man and nature during the second Indochina war, 1961-1975.

At the plenary sessions and working groups the scientists presented some 72 scientific reports and papers dealing with the following problems:

- The scope and nature of operation Ranch hand conducted in Vietnam from 1961-1971,
- The long-term effects of military herbicides and defoliants on man (about 29 reports) and on nature (about 43 reports),
- The results of experimental studies on herbicides in laboratories or in the field on a small scale,
- The results of studies on the consequences of herbicides from accidents occurring in factories producing them and their effects on groups of workers dealing with chemicals used in agriculture.

Scientists exchanged views, evaluated the results of studies in laboratories and in field experiments. They discussed the research work to be conducted in the near future aimed at eliminating the consequences of the indiscriminate use of herbicides and defoliants on a large scale. They also discussed the possibilities of international co-operation in the field of research.

During the time the symposium was held the scientists visited an exhibition displaying all kinds of chemical weapons used during the war and the effects of herbicides and defoliants on nature and man.

Participants to the symposium also visited the Mada - forest area, Dong Nai province (in the former Long Khanh province, war zone of South Vietnam). Here wartime destruction caused to nature remains very apparent. Mada can in effects be considered one model for experimental field studies as regards the direct and indirect effects of herbicides and defoliants on tropical inland forests, the latter including fire. The visit to the Mada forest gave participants a clear idea of the lengthy duration of effects of herbicides disturbance on the natural restoration of tropical inland forests.

At the symposium scientists were engaged in active work in a friendly atmosphere. Although most scientists met one another for the first time, their discussions and exchanges of views were conducted in an open, straightforward and frank way and in their private capacities, and this helped ensure good results for the symposium.