

stratosphere, and the health of the oceans" which, if exceeded, "may endanger the continuance of human life on this planet."<sup>42</sup>

By 1975 the Council had agreed to activities proposed by the Executive Director "in the area of possible risks to the ozone layer" and a UNEP strategy was developed. These early initiatives by UNEP and associated international organizations led up to the presentation to an intergovernmental expert meeting in March 1977 of a proposed "Action Plan to Protect Stratospheric Ozone" that laid the basis for unprecedented accomplishments in subsequent years. Since this early background to the Vienna Convention of 1985 and the 1987 Montreal Protocol are not well known, a summary is presented in Annex of steps taken between 1971 and 1977 leading to international research and monitoring efforts that laid the basis for what became, in the view of UNEP's Executive Director, "the first global convention to address an issue that for the time being seems far in the future and is of unknown proportions". Improved assessments made possible by the 1977 action plan continue to be of use, they led governments to agree in London in June 1990 on a total phase-out of CFC production under the Montreal Protocol and to set up new institutional and funding mechanisms.

Many of the steps now underway to cope with the "Greenhouse" issue draw on this experience. This suggests that this task has been well-performed for international pollution problems. As noted earlier, however, international problems related to degraded natural resources, such as desertification, have been better mapped and measured but improved assessments have not led to significant management action (although a possible agreement on global forests may be drawn up during UNCED preparations).

Beginning with the Mediterranean Action Plan in 1975 UNEP's future orientation and focus on collective planning to cope with common problems has shown considerable success despite high levels of political and even military tension between states in this region. And in more than one region, cabinet ministers of states actively engaged in hostilities have sat together to identify and agree on steps they could take to safeguard mutual future interests.

2. TO PROVIDE GENERAL POLICY GUIDANCE FOR THE ~~DIRECTION AND COORDI-~~  
NATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS WITHIN THE UN SYSTEM. This function is closely related to co-ordination functions assigned to the Executive Director