

This wordy environmental blueprint contains some positive sections, but also some disappointing and out-dated concepts. For example, Janine Ferretti of Pollution Probe told the Committee that the Agenda 21 chapters on waste and toxic chemicals are out-dated because they do not refer to the concept of "sunsetting," or phasing-out, of toxic chemicals, which is a process which has already begun in Canada and other countries. However, as Arthur Hanson, President and CEO of the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) advised us, most of Canada's domestic environmental initiatives are not up to the standard of achievement demanded by Agenda 21, and will have to be reviewed and improved. The UNCED Secretariat estimated that to make Agenda 21 happen would cost over US \$100 billion per year throughout this decade. The new money committed at Rio will not make possible the commencement of the Agenda 21 action plans. Beyond the lack of financing, Agenda 21 was further weakened by the absence of commitments to concrete actions; prioritization of issues; and mechanisms for technology transfer, monitoring and reporting.

Along with Agenda 21, three follow-up conferences were negotiated at Rio:

- At the urging of African nations it was agreed to immediately begin negotiations on a Convention to combat desertification for finalization by June 1994.
- The UN Environment Program will convene a conference on land-based sources of marine pollution.
- Nations agreed on a number of principles to regulate the conservation of high-sea fisheries, and also agreed to a conference on this issue to be held in 1993. On the issue of overfishing Canada achieved a major concession from European nations who agreed to the immediate halt of fishing for Northern Cod off the Grand Banks. Subsequently, other distant fishing nations also agreed to a fishing moratorium.

## **2. Statement of Forest Principles**

This document is a non-binding statement of principles to be used as a global guide for the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. The immediate goal of the document is to encourage individual nations to take action to preserve their forest resources. The fact that the work of the Canadian delegation at UNCED did not result in a legally binding forestry convention was a disappointment for Canada. The forestry negotiations represented one of the biggest North-South struggles of UNCED: to northern industrial countries, tropical forests are seen as greenhouse gas "sinks" that absorb CO<sub>2</sub>, helping slow climate change; while to developing countries of the South the forest is one of the few important resources they can exploit, as potential farmland, a source of fuel, and as a product they can trade internationally. Having worked hard for a binding international convention, the ineffective statement of principles which was signed is disappointing. Canada agreed to it on the unspoken understanding that international negotiations toward a Forest Convention would follow Rio.

## **3. The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)**

It was agreed at the conference that a Sustainable Development Commission be established to coordinate and follow-up international action toward the achievement of sustainable development goals. The Commission is to be part of the United Nations and is to report to the General Assembly through the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The Commission is expected to receive *National Reports*, compile information provided by national governments on their implementation of Agenda 21, and consider the problems faced by individual nations in their efforts to implement and achieve sustainable development.