

tiny flags marking the sites of future oil refineries, shipyards, steel and chemical complexes all of which discharge their untreated effluents into the sea in most countries. The eight states bound by the first Kuwait protocol are now committed to pursue economic development without harming their common resources. They have also established procedures for regional cooperation in meeting oil and other pollution emergencies. Their plan places great emphasis on reducing the hazards in the oil and shipping industries.

An action plan binding 16 coastal countries in West and Central Africa has been adapted this year, together with a protocol committing them to cooperation in marine pollution emergencies. The agreement concerning the Gulf of Guinea region authorizes the signatories for the first time to engage in "hot pursuit" through each other's territorial waters any oil tanker responsible for causing pollution. The plan calls for joint assessments of pollution levels from many sources including the land-based industries. The program is to start with field training and workshops in environment management procedures to be held for local technical personnel.

A regional convention for safeguarding the environment is expected to be passed shortly in the context of the action plan for the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. An outstanding feature of the plan is that it covers areas relatively far inland as well as the sea and the coastlines. For example, the plan calls for surveys and projections on agricultural expansion and likely future pressures of human population. It has strong conservation and management chapters. Key activities in the action plan include environment impact studies concerning various aspects of industrial development as well as oil pollution control and the coordination of public health, water management and training schemes.

The five countries involved in South-east Asia's regional sea program recently announced their intention to trim their action plan. Scientific projects remaining on their short-list include those related to oceanography, pollution and the coral and mangrove ecosystems. In the sphere of environment management, the emphasis is on oil pollution control, waste disposal and information exchange.

Plans for the Pacific

Projects on environment impact assessment and nature conservation have been dropped. A spokesman explains that the revised program signifies a postponement of some projects in order to give the remaining ones 'top priority'. Two action plans are being prepared for the South Pacific, both of them promoted by a regional organization concerned with environment management. The first of the two, covering the South-east Pacific, is expected to be approved formally at an inter-governmental conference in August. The second plan, for the South-west Pacific, may well follow in

February, 1982. The launching conferences are preceded by preparatory meetings, lectures and specialist seminars as the draft action plans, intended to reflect the joint experience and common interests of the countries in each zone, are taking shape.

In addition, the governments of East Africa and those of the South-west Atlantic have decided recently to go ahead with similar action plans of their own. Their consultations are still at an early stage. Some countries will be involved in more than one scheme. Egypt, for example, participates in both the Mediterranean and the Red Sea action plans, Saudi Arabia in the Kuwait and Red Sea plans and Somalia in the Red Sea and the projected East African scheme.

"We developing countries frequently take the short-term gains of immediate development when these conflict with the long-term strategy of conserving environment assets", says Edward Seaga, the Prime Minister of Jamaica, where the Caribbean action plan's central coordination unit is about to be established. "Justifiable situations do, of course, exist, and even the most developed and the least developed among us have at some time compromised the environment for the sake of major material advancement. What is really at issue is not the handling of extreme positions but the overall balance in policy and executive decisions determining the level of priority which we give to the environment."

Comprehensive environmental treaty

Each regional action plan comprises a binding collective compromise in response to that crucial question. The Caribbean governments have pledged to draw up a comprehensive environmental treaty within two years. Many schemes in the program will require considerable trans-national cooperation. One project, for example, calls for coordinated activities for the protection of endangered species in order to maintain the region's wealth of genetic resources. Another project will evaluate, with a view to modifying, the impact of building engineering and mining activities on the vulnerable coastal areas. A third involves a scientific study on the effects of pesticides on the most important crops of the region.

Despite a broad agreement in principle among the contracting countries, the implementation of many projects may well give rise to conflicts of interest. "Given the great political and economic diversity of the Caribbean", says one observer in an understatement, "all the states of the region will not necessarily have the same priorities." Or, in the words of the Jamaican Prime Minister, "our action plan is the result of the greatest effort in collaboration ever made in the Caribbean."

In certain spheres, the action plan split a region into several zones. The Caribbean is one of the world's most important oil producing regions, for example; yet many of its countries have no alternative to unconven-