

1982 Special Session of the Council (a sequel is now under preparation for 1992).

These significant reviews on conditions and trends in all key environmental areas at a global, regional and even national level, are largely based on results from UNEP's "Earthwatch" program but represent only the "tip of the iceberg." They incorporate results of research and monitoring efforts such as "GEMS" - the Global Environmental Monitoring System - "IRPTC" - the International Registry of Potentially Toxic Compounds - and INFOTERRA - UNEP's world-wide referral system with over 130 national focal points, as well as other assessment activities underway throughout the UN system and beyond.

Increasingly, these assessment results are compiled in a form that reaches audiences beyond those already interested in environmental matters. This is done through cooperative arrangements with other institutions - mostly academic and non-profit - such as the Monitoring and Research Center (MARC) at Chelsea University in London, and the World Resources Institute (WRI) in Washington, whose biennial World Resources Report is widely circulated and translated.<sup>46</sup>

As to "identifying emerging problems," the Executive Director's annual reports are intended to lay a basis for the Council to select these and the results may be judged by their subject matter ranging from comprehensive coverage of each topic in UNEP's priority areas, to, most recently, "the public and environment".

However, as noted earlier, a main finding of the 1972-1982 decadal review remains valid and even more pertinent today in light of current understanding of the locale in which critical changes are probably taking place:

The first general conclusion is that the data base is of very variable quality . . . there are startling gaps and a special lack of reliable quantitative information about the environment in the developing world. . . . some good programmes of regional marine monitoring, there are no reliable global data on the pollution of the oceans and seas. The amount and condition of ground waters is another area of uncertainty. On land, in spite of the recently completed preliminary assessment of tropical forests, there is conflicting evidence on the scale and rate of deforestation. There are general local and/or regional figures for the extent of deserts, rangelands, farmlands and other major land-use categories but detailed information about their condition - and rates of degradation - are rarely available.<sup>47</sup>

Work is presently underway to bring this review up to date by 1992, but as of this time, although there have been improvements, the situation remains about the same in terms of the adequacy of data for policy decisions, particularly at the national level. For example, in its review of the requirements