

NOTES, NEWS & COMMENTS

World Council For The Biosphere

CONSTITUTION

1. The main *purpose* of the World Council For The Biosphere (WCB) shall be to safeguard the continuing integrity of The Biosphere by serving as a select international forum for the analysis and appraisal of existing and foreseeable relationships between human population and economic development on one hand and, on the other, the totality of living and life-support systems of our planet which collectively constitute The Biosphere. The Council shall consist of eminent leaders in fields of endeavour related to environmental concerns, and shall avoid all partisan political pressures while striving always to be totally independent of personal bias in its activities, decisions, and recommendations.
2. The *objectives* of WCB are:
 - (A) Alerting decision-makers (in both Government and the private sector) to potential threats to the integrity of The Biosphere especially from human activity and, whenever and wherever possible, recommending measures to counter those threats;
 - (B) Advising on ways to improve the sustainability of desirable economic systems while maintaining the integrity of the ecological systems that form the main bases of continuing human activity, and especially of agricultural, forestal, freshwater, and marine, productivity;
 - (C) Fostering ecologically sensitive thinking and action, bearing in mind the holistic nature of The Biosphere in which each and every part should contribute to the overall integrity, and that realization of this truth should lead to responsible stewardship for collective survival;
 - (D) Investigating the limits and validity of key assumptions underlying predictions especially regarding smooth functioning of The Biosphere, and the sensitivity of models based on those assumptions;
 - (E) Warning against specific dangers to The Biosphere, including major pollutions, breakdown or malfunctioning of Man-made devices, and misguided practices;
 - (F) Promoting the World Campaign for The Biosphere as a global educational effort to increase public awareness and understanding of our dependence on The Biosphere as the life-support system of Planet Earth (of which we humans constitute an integral part, with unique brainpower which must be responsibly used);
 - (G) Advising the International Society For Environmental Education (ISEE) and its affiliates on critical issues and leading concepts to be considered in their development of educational materials and programmes for decision-makers, the young, and the general citizenry, throughout the world.
3. *Councillors* of WCB shall be those currently operative and shall not be fewer than 16 or more than 21 in number at any one time. Each Councillor is elected initially for a term of four years by a simple majority of Councillors voting at a general meeting (if not earlier appointed, namely up to the Fourth AGM). A Councillor may be reelected for a second consecutive term of four years by the same means at the General Meeting preceding the expiry of the initial term. Any subsequent re-election shall not become valid until the candidate has been off the Council for a period of at least one statutory year, and shall then be on the terms of the first election as regards possible re-election.
4. *Nominations* to fill Council vacancies may be made at any time by any current or past Councillor of WCB or by the Executive Committee of WCB (*see* 6 below), who shall thereupon solicit the confidential vote of each Councillor, elections being by simple majority of those voting, provided that at least eight votes are received within two calendar months of the intimation being sent. In the event of a tie, the President of WCB shall have an additional, deciding vote.
5. So far as proves practicable: (i) the *Council* shall consist of members broadly representative of the various regions of the world or major environmental concerns, having a substantial record of distinguished contribution to some aspect of environmental study, protection of The Biosphere, or supporting activity, and (ii) all six normally inhabited continents shall be represented on the Council and (on the basis of residence when elected) no single country shall contribute more than three Councillors at any one time.
6. The *officers* of WCB shall be the President, a Vice-President, one Officer-at-large, and an Executive Secretary, who shall together constitute the Executive Committee and policy-proposing body. The said Officers shall be appointed by the Councillors from among themselves (or exceptionally in the case of the Executive Secretary from outside), and shall normally serve out their terms as Councillors in those appointed offices—except that any Officer or Councillor can be removed by a two-thirds majority by secret ballot of Councillors present at any Annual General or Special Meeting (*see* next below).
7. *Meetings*: there shall be at least an Annual General Meeting of the Council in each calendar year, for which at least three months' notice shall be sent. In addition, Special Meetings may be called by the Executive Committee or the President at any time, for which at least one month's notice shall normally be given. Eleven Councillors or Proxies (*see* 8 below) shall constitute a quorum (at both types of meeting), and can include in their number those Councillors who, having received the Agenda, indicate their reaction in writing to the Executive Secretary. Except if otherwise specified, decisions of the Council shall be taken by a simple majority of Councillors and Proxies present *plus* those who have registered their reaction to the item with the Executive Secretary or the President. Each Councillor or

Proxy shall have a single vote, though in the event of a tie the presiding officer shall have a deciding vote. Minutes of each Council meeting shall be kept by the Executive Secretary or an appointed Deputy and be sent promptly to all Councillors. The Secretary-General of ISEE, *ex officio*, shall be constituted a non-voting member of WCB, and the same privilege shall be accorded to a single registered delegate of each other collaborating agency.

8. If unable to attend a meeting, a Councillor may brief and send a qualified *Proxy*, if possible armed with a letter to an officer of the Council, which shall then have the power to constitute such Proxy a full member of that meeting only. Non-voting observers or guests may be invited to attend any meeting at the discretion of the Council (as decided by a least two members of its Executive Committee).
9. Although the activities of Councillors on behalf of the Council are strictly voluntary, there shall be established as soon as possible an *Endowment Fund* from

the revenues of which their expenses can be reimbursed and the Executive Secretary be duly recompensed. Until such time as this Fund has been established and the Council can seek recognition as a separate body if so desiring, it shall remain under the aegis of the Foundation for Environmental Conservation and be subject to Swiss laws and governmental surveillance.

10. In the event of *dissolution* of the Council, all assets other than property of the sponsoring Foundation shall be distributed to one or more non-profit organizations of similar purpose.
11. This Constitution of the World Council For The Biosphere may be *amended* by a two-thirds majority vote of all Councillors present and voting at a fully constituted meeting of the Council.

Revised to 17 May 1988

*c/o The Foundation for Environmental Conservation
7 Chemin Taverney, 1218 Grand-Saconnex
Geneva, Switzerland.*

Vernadsky Commemoration 'Round Table Resolutions'

As a final roundup of the 'Jubilee events dedicated to Academician V.I. Vernadsky's 125th birthday anniversary', an impressive 'round table' meeting of about 20 invited participants was held on the evening of the final day of the events described on pp. 187-9 of this issue. It took place in the Culture-Hall of Moscow State University before an audience of some 330 (apart from the platform party), of whom several posed questions or made useful comments during its 3 1/2 hours of constant deliberation.

The Chairman of this propitious occasion was Professor Vadim V. Zagladin, who was assisted by Professor Victor A. Kovda, our Journal's Advisory Editor on matters pertaining to Soils and Erosion, and, after the latter had spoken in detail following the Chairman's brief introduction, your Editor was called on to present the six resolutions which had been prepared for presentation at the Bolshoy Theatre on the preceding evening but were not dealt with owing to lack of time to consider any resolutions at all.

The last circumstance was fortunate to the extent that it enabled some redrafting of Resolutions 3 and 4 following actual establishment of the Vernadsky Foundation only on the day of the final roundup, thus crowning Vernadsky's birthday celebrations: but it was unfortunate in that the outcome cannot be considered as binding the entire body of participants of the commemoration described on pp. 187-9. Nevertheless it is gratifying to record that, although each draft resolution was given out phrase-by-phrase in English followed by Russian, each was passed separately by acclamation. These approved Round Table Resolutions were as follows and thus express the unanimous wishes of a substantial body of independent adherents including some leading Soviet and international figures:

1. Much confusion having resulted in the past from the indiscriminate use of the key term of 'biosphere' in several different senses and contexts, it is resolved henceforth to restrict its meaning to that stemming from Vernadsky, which we interpret as: The integrated living and life-supporting system comprising the peripheral envelope of Planet Earth together with its surrounding atmosphere so far down, and up, as any form of life exists naturally. We recommend [and have long practised] capitalization of the

initial letters of [what we write and print consistently as] 'The Biosphere'.

2. The environmental movement being now well-established globally, it is resolved henceforth to recognize what may be termed the 'Vernadskyan revolution' as an important aspect of it, calling on all involved bodies and interests to pay special attention to [that revolution's] main thrust of the healthful maintenance of The Biosphere.

3. The [International] Vernadsky Foundation having been established with its initial complement of ten Founding Members under the aegis of the USSR Academy of Sciences on this 12th day of March 1988, being the 125th anniversary of the birth of the great thinker and dedicated to the heritage of his work, we believe and hereby request should have special reference to the vast environmental implications of his concept of The Biosphere and its protection for the welfare of Mankind and Nature in perpetuity.

4. We further supplicate that the Vernadsky Foundation consider stressing due reverence for life as a perpetual crusade to be pursued henceforth with maximum aspirations.

5. Be it resolved that this [body] supports in principle the Foundation for Environmental Conservation's endeavours to organize a Fourth International Conference on Environmental Future on the theme of Threats to The Biosphere and Imperative Countermeasures [, and at the same time records its] hearty support for the initiative and thrust of the World Campaign for The Biosphere, the World Council For The Biosphere, and the allied International Society for Environmental Education as a key necessity for our future world.

6. As fortunate guests [in many cases] who have been honoured by invitation by the USSR Academy of Sciences and [for the Round Table] by Moscow State University to participate in this momentous commemoration of the life and work of Academician Vladimir Ivanovich Vernadsky, we heartily commend the Academy for their timely initiative while thanking them warmly for their hospitality and, above all, reaffirming our fervent reverence for life as the ultimate deity.

[N.P., Moscow, 13 March 1988]