

[Close](#)

www.barcelona2004.org

Fecha: 07/06/2004

<http://www.barcelona2004.org/eng/actualidad/noticias/html/f042363.htm>

Klaus Töpfer: “Its green helmets Im calling for, not blue ones”

During the second plenary session of the Dialogue “Water: Life and Security”, the topic of uses of water and development was discussed by Klaus Töpfer, Rita Levi-Montalcini and Mohamed Elyazghi. The session was moderated by Àngels Mataró, director of the United Nations in Spain.

Klaus Töpfer, executive director of the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), pointed out how such aspects as poverty, the environment, security and peace are interrelated. Töpfer believes combined action is important for changing conflictive situations in these areas. “I am not calling for blue helmets to solve conflicts, but green ones to help dig wells, provide access to water and fight poverty,” stated Töpfer.

Töpfer added that “it is necessary to protect cultural diversity and biodiversity on the same scale, as losing one implies losing the other.” Furthermore, Töpfer said that the lack of access to water is not a matter of availability or amount, but one of management resulting from an investment crisis in this area. “Feeding animals in the North costs as much as providing access to drinking water in the South,” stated Töpfer as part of his comment on investment priorities. Töpfer called for “water to be not just a resource but part of an ecosystem, and action is necessary.”

Rita Levi-Montalcini, winner of the Nobel Prize for Medicine and honorary president of Green Cross Italy, gave statistics to describe the poor situation regarding access to water. He stated that roughly one billion people in the world do not have drinking water and almost five million people, mostly children, die each year due to bad water conditions.

Montalcini stated that the Global Forum Rome’s mayor, Walter Beltroni, proposed in 2001 is one possible solution and explained that it involves cooperation between cities and people, rather than between states. Montalcini commented that “it is necessary to de-centralize the power held by states, as, up until now, it has not proven to be efficient in this area.” He concluded by stating that “the water crisis must be approached on a local level and it is the mayors who have the autonomy to take action to face these major challenges.”

Mohamed Elyazghi, Morocco’s Minister for Water and Territorial Order, spoke of the experiences had by his country and the importance of territorial order as a means for attaining cohesion as regards access to water. Elyazghi stated that “it is necessary to guarantee the most underprivileged sectors of the population access to public services and an adapted rate system to the general public without sacrificing quality.”

[More information about Water for life and security](#)

[Close](#)

Copyright©Forum2004. Todos los derechos reservados.