

## **A slimmer UNIDO under new leadership**

### **Closing of 7th General Conference in Vienna**

This week, the 7th General Conference of UNIDO took place in Vienna. Before the end of the meeting on Friday, the 35-year old Argentine Carlos Alfredo Magariños was confirmed as new Director-General of UNIDO; he replaces the Mexican Mauricio de Maria y Campos. Magariños, who has the job of implementing the past reform plan, in his opening address advocated a more flexible and dynamic UNIDO.

#### **Extensive cooperation basis wanted**

After year-long discussions over new directions for the UN specialized agency the term reform is being consciously avoided. "Transformation" is the catchword of the Argentine, who apparently wants to signal to countries as Germany, Japan and Switzerland, that the measures shall be taken swiftly. This includes in particular the focussing of activities on the areas of strength of UNIDO and the decentralization of activities away from Vienna to centres in developing countries. As Magariños said to journalists, cooperation with other UN agencies should be put on a new footing as well as cooperation with the private sector, for example the finance sector in the hope of new financing opportunities for specific programmes.

#### **Asking for quick action**

As expected, Member States accepted the new double-budget for the years 1998 and 1999, which with 129,5 million US\$ has been cut by 20 % compared to the previous two-year period. The Germans, who had advocated a 40% budget cut, appeared still to be convinced that the Organization could also function with further cuts. In contrast to the typical euphemistic press releases of UNIDO, many industrialized countries view the future with critical optimism. The reform efforts were generally positively reviewed. At the same time there was a clear call to let deeds follow decisions on paper. In this context the Swiss delegation recalled that a reform is not a one-time action but a continuing process. In order to allow swift realization, many member states asked slow-paying countries to settle their arrears, which all together amount to four fifth of the new budget.