

FRANCE

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS*

France responded at an early stage to pressures on the environment from industrialisation and urban development, setting up institutions with special responsibility for pollution control and natural resource management. Its environmental policy, within a comprehensive legislative framework, is implemented at different levels of government, relies upon co-operation between the relevant authorities and private stakeholders and makes use of a wide array of instruments, including regulations, economic instruments, planning and voluntary measures. From the start, French policy has shaped and been shaped by the development of environmental policy at the European level.

In the 1990s, French environmental policy has received new impetus from the implementation of the National Environment Plan, stronger implementation and incorporation of the concept of sustainable development. The current trend is towards efficient natural resource management, environment related job creation, reductions in public health expenditure, enhancement of urban environmental quality and protection of nature and landscapes. Now that France has achieved control of industrial air and water pollution and established the basis for an effective waste management system, present environmental issues focus on pollution from agriculture and transport, air quality in major cities, expansion of the network of protected areas and protection of coastal areas.

This OECD report sets out the baseline for assessing future environmental progress, and examines France's environmental performance in three areas:

- implementation of environmental policy;
- integration of environmental concerns into economic decision making;
- international co-operation on environmental protection.

It also assesses the extent to which France's domestic objectives and international commitments are being met, based on environmental effectiveness and economic efficiency criteria. A number of recommendations are put forward that could contribute to further environmental progress in France.

1. Implementing Environmental Policies

A set of laws on environmental protection, regional and urban development and devolution forms a highly comprehensive institutional and legal framework consistent with the principle of subsidiarity. The Ministry of the Environment, founded in 1971, was given greater resources in the early 1990s, together with supervision of specialised agencies and decentralised services. Most of the environmental expenditure in France is carried out by public authorities, particularly at regional and local level. At national level, the Ministries of Research, of Industry, of Equipment, of Health and of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food also make a substantial contribution to efforts aiming at environmental protection.

Results and effectiveness of implementation

Through the combined use of regulations, economic instruments, planning procedures and voluntary actions, environmental policy is, on the whole, both effective and well balanced. Integrated pollution prevention and control (air, water, waste and risk management) for the 68 000 classified facilities that must undergo authorisation, as well as increasing pressure from the inspectorates of such facilities for industry to achieve environmental objectives, have proved effective. France makes wide use of economic instruments; it applies the polluter pays principle and is aiming to get prices right for natural resources. Planning also plays a role through the National Environment Plan, central-regional planning contracts, and local land use, marine resource, water and risk management plans. Voluntary agreements have been used to encourage industry to invest in pollution control. Substantial environmental R&D efforts, both public and private, are being made. The gradual strengthening of environmental policy implementation and of related funding, as well as the systematic use of economic instruments, have contributed to economic effectiveness and growth in investment. For example, very good results have been obtained for point-source pollution, especially in industry.

* Conclusions and Recommendations approved by the Group on Environmental Performance at its November 1996 meeting.

Environmental policy is not always adequately implemented, however. Often polluters are not identified or have been granted waivers, and sanctions are rarely used to discourage environmental offences. Despite efforts by the central administration, problems remain in certain municipalities because of lack of resources or political resolve. Examples concern sewerage and waste water treatment, flood risk prevention plans, urban traffic management and related pollution, and implementation of the coastal law. Substantial efforts still need to be made to combat pollution at municipal level and from agriculture; to these ends, major investments are planned and the rates of charges are being raised significantly. The rapid expansion of environmental legislation and regulation has made environmental law overly complex; the forthcoming adoption and publication of an Environment Code should help improve understanding of the laws and encourage their more systematic implementation.

To promote greater environmental and economic effectiveness, it is recommended that consideration be given to the following proposals:

- continue to use economic instruments, and increase and differentiate the rate and basis of environmental taxes and charges; continue to provide for the means to finance the increased public and private investment needed to ensure the success of environmental policy;
- make greater use of economic assessments and cost-benefit analysis or, failing this, cost-effectiveness analysis in formulating environmental policies;
- increase environmental monitoring and make comparative assessments of how environmental protection measures are implemented in the country's different regions and major cities;
- within a tradition of consultation, seek to improve the enforcement of laws and regulations; ensure that the relevant authorities fully implement regulations, reinforce the corps of inspectors and apply criminal or administrative sanctions to infringements;
- maintain support for R&D and job training related to the environment;
- continue to apply life-cycle analysis as well as analysis of externalities, and improve the quality and availability of data.

Water

France has abundant water resources and a wide variety of aquatic ecosystems of high ecological quality. The institutional structure, comprising River Basin Committees and Water Agencies, has made it possible for water resources to be managed by drainage basin, with involvement of all stakeholders, since the late 1960s. It has also ensured substantial funding through application of the polluter pays and user pays principles. The increase in water prices during the 1990s has allowed investment levels to be stepped up. At present, 77 per cent of the population is connected to waste water treatment facilities. The authorities are strengthening the role of economic instruments and applying the principle of "water paying for water". The corresponding means have made possible a major reduction in pollutant discharges by industry, and should be sufficient to reduce pollution generated by municipalities to meet the EU targets for 2000. The quality of bathing waters has markedly improved in the past 15 years. Master plans for water management and development are being drawn up to broaden the scope of planning procedures.

Over the past few years, both the general public and the authorities have become aware of the importance of certain problems: overuse of resources compounded by periods of drought; catastrophic flooding; occasionally substandard drinking water, particularly in terms of microbiological quality and nitrates; unsatisfactory waste water treatment in many cities; agricultural pollution (from intensive livestock raising and use of fertilisers and pesticides) affecting the quality of surface and groundwater; and insufficient attention to aquatic ecosystem management. Prices and charges for agricultural water use fall well short of covering the costs of supply.

It is recommended that consideration be given to the following proposals:

- increase the dissuasive strength of regulatory requirements by making greater use of the enforcement powers of the State's decentralised services; consider simplifying and reorganising decision-making powers with regard to implementation of regulations; ensure that decision making is entrusted to the decentralised authorities of the State;
- further apply the strategy of internalising costs through charges and prices to finance water policy, as is already done with industry and local authorities;
- continue efforts to improve the performance of sewerage and waste water treatment facilities; maintain efforts to ensure that local authorities build the facilities necessary to meet objectives;

- take measures to curb excessive withdrawals for irrigation and to reduce agricultural pollution of surface and groundwater (from intensive cultivation and livestock raising); strengthen economic signals within the agriculture sector (charges and prices) and the integration of policies relating to water into agricultural policies and practices;
- strengthen the assessment criteria relating to the impact of projects on aquatic ecosystems;
- strengthen controls on land use in areas subject to flooding;
- step up monitoring of drinking water and of the quality of watercourses and aquifers.

Air

Significant progress has been made concerning emissions of the main pollutants as well as of CO₂, and France has met its international commitments. For instance, emissions of SO₂ and NO_x have fallen since 1980 by 72 and 14 per cent, respectively; CO₂ emissions have fallen by 27 per cent. All these emissions are among the lowest in the OECD both per unit of GDP and per capita. Reductions have been achieved in all economic sectors except transport. This progress is the result of structural changes in the economy, improved energy efficiency, the use of nuclear power to generate electricity and the implementation of environmental policies that generally combine pollution control regulations (e.g. integrated pollution control in classified facilities, vehicle emission standards) with economic instruments (e.g. earmarked charges on air pollution, tax differentials favouring low-sulphur and unleaded fuels). Air quality has greatly improved throughout France as regards SO₂ and lead, as well as locally near major stationary sources.

Many pollution episodes still occur, however, mainly related to emissions from road transport. The formation of photochemical smog due to NO_x and VOC emissions, as well as increased emissions of fine particulates as a result of rapid growth in the diesel vehicle fleet, are serious causes for concern over public health in major cities. Efforts related to air management should therefore be stepped up considerably as regards such pollution. This requires a broader strategy involving environmental planning, efforts to increase cost-effectiveness in the implementation of regulations and the use of economic instruments, and integration of air pollution concerns into sectoral policies such as those for transport and energy (e.g. energy conservation in dwellings, in public buildings and in small and medium-sized enterprises).

It is recommended that consideration be given to the following proposals:

- draw up a national air pollution control strategy that combines a timetable setting out quantitative targets with sectoral measures whose cost-effectiveness has been assessed;
- enforce regulations more vigorously, notably by inspecting classified facilities more often and increasing the severity of administrative and criminal sanctions;
- make greater use of economic instruments for air management, notably as regards taxes levied on mobile sources;
- enhance the integration of air pollution concerns in the definition of national and local policies on land use, urban planning, energy and transport;
- continue to extend and modernise the air quality monitoring network, particularly to accommodate new concerns about fine particulate emissions and ground-level ozone.

Waste

France's waste management policy is based on legislation introduced in the mid-1970s on waste disposal, recovery of materials and integrated pollution control at classified industrial facilities, as well as a 1992 law that is intended to end landfilling of raw waste by 2002 and that gives priority to prevention and to recycling and recovery. Charges on landfilling of household and similar waste and on special industrial waste, along with a fee on packaging, are levied to support this policy. At *département* level, plans regarding the disposal of household and similar waste are largely in place. France was a driving force in negotiations on transboundary movements of waste, and rapidly implemented the Basel Convention. This wide-ranging policy has already shown positive results. Economic instruments play a major role in the financing of national waste management policy. Household waste collection services are available to almost the entire population. Industry is active in the management of packaging waste (e.g. through the Eco-Emballages system). Contractual, regulatory or economic measures to encourage waste recycling and recovery have led to progress in the 1980s and 1990s, although the recycling rates are not yet among the highest in the OECD. France has an effective network of treatment and disposal facilities for industrial waste,

efficiently managed in accordance with the regulations on classified facilities, and its capacity is amply sufficient to meet current needs for the treatment of domestic and imported waste. An inventory of contaminated sites and soil has been made.

It now remains to ensure that this policy is properly implemented. With regard to household waste, some départements have adopted a policy of separate collection, recovery and recycling, while others appear to have opted for incineration alone, which could adversely affect less developed systems for material recovery and recycling. The role of economic instruments in achieving objectives for waste reduction at source or material recovery is limited. With regard to industrial waste, better data on flows and stocks are needed; small and medium-sized enterprises should assume greater responsibility for such waste, and efforts are needed to dispel uncertainty over the environmental impact of the various waste management options. More generally, measures to promote waste reduction at source have yet to be defined. Clean-up of contaminated sites and soil has only just begun.

It is recommended that consideration be given to the following proposals:

- take the necessary steps at national level to direct and harmonise waste disposal plans at the level of départements and regions, to ensure that the objectives of waste reduction at source, recycling/recovery and treatment are fully met;
- step up current efforts affecting all relevant stakeholders so that, by 2002, all waste is sent to treatment centres and final waste storage facilities, with traditional landfilling of raw waste completely halted;
- promote the creation of regional centres for final waste;
- adopt measures to promote waste reduction at source; increase the rate of recovery and find markets for recycled products; develop separate collection of toxic materials in household waste as well as their treatment;
- review the effectiveness of waste management regulations, particularly with regard to the priority goals of prevention, reduction and recycling/recovery;
- accelerate the clean-up of contaminated sites and soil identified as priority cases.

Biodiversity and nature conservation

Despite pressures on nature from economic activities, France has preserved rural areas and natural habitats of great variety and biological value. Its landscapes and its fauna and flora, which represent four of the five major biogeographical areas found in Europe, are ecological, economic and cultural assets. The legal and institutional framework for nature protection is comprehensive, particularly with regard to protected areas and land management. Stringently protected natural areas make up 10 per cent of the territory. Protection and management programmes for endangered species have led to the re-establishment or reintroduction of certain species. Significant resources are devoted to an overall strategy aimed at better knowledge and protection of France's natural heritage. The 1990 National Environment Plan provides a framework for a very ambitious biodiversity conservation policy; some of its objectives have already been met, but substantial funding will continue to be needed in coming years. France has met most of its international commitments concerning nature conservation, has taken various international initiatives (e.g. with regard to whale sanctuaries and trade in ivory) and provides considerable financial assistance for nature protection through bilateral and multilateral aid programmes.

While France is vigorously pursuing a policy of designating protected areas, the country's national parks, nature reserves and regional parks may nevertheless not be immune to environmental damage. The process of devolution has often led to priority being given at local level to economic interests rather than nature management; in many cases it has yet to be determined what approach to regional and local development offers the best balance between nature conservation and economic interests. Given the extent of its rural areas, France should pay particular attention to agri-environmental measures and should better integrate management of land use and biodiversity; greater consistency is needed in support measures, in terms of both the amounts given and the choice of priorities at regional level. Forest fires continue to cause serious concern. France has yet to finalise its list of protected nature sites under the EU habitat directive. Biological data collection and the creation and use of inventories rely largely on networks of volunteers.

It is recommended that consideration be given to the following proposals:

- develop and adopt a co-ordinated set of biodiversity objectives for habitats and species;
- make more resources available for biodiversity research;

- ensure that legal instruments for the protection of the countryside are implemented, particularly in the case of recently adopted instruments;
- increase the degree to which socio-economic and environmental considerations are incorporated in the designation and management of protected areas, as well as the public's commitment to such a policy, so as to improve safeguards against the pressures on such areas, particularly national parks;
- ensure that concerns relating to landscape protection are properly taken into account by national and local authorities in sectoral policies;
- give priority to measures aimed at sustainable development of agriculture, especially by ensuring greater environmental consistency in agricultural support measures.

2. **Integrating Environmental Concerns and Economic Decisions**

The integration of environmental concerns into economic and sectoral decision making is essential to improving environmental performance and moving towards sustainable development. Such integration is also needed to achieve cost-effective responses to environmental challenges. Economic forces and changes in such major sectors as energy, industry, agriculture, transport and tourism strongly influence environmental conditions and trends, and hence can either enhance or diminish the benefits of environmental policy and technical progress.

Strengthening institutional integration

The pursuit of strategies geared towards sustainable development and protection of the natural heritage is a constant in France's environmental policy. The Minister of the Environment chairs the Interministerial Committee for the Environment and is involved in all major government decisions of relevance to the environment. The Ministry of the Environment closely collaborates with stakeholders (industry, unions, non-profit associations, subnational authorities). However, despite high prices for road fuels and water, household consumption remains high. As for consumption patterns in government operations, France has to implement a policy of "greening" of public administrations, combining environmental effectiveness and economic efficiency.

Decoupling of economic growth and certain environmental pressures has been achieved, with a marked reduction since 1980 in emissions of a wide range of air pollutants, while GDP grew 30 per cent. More recently, decoupling has also been observed with regard to phosphates, nitrogenous fertilisers and pesticides. In the past 15 years, however, waste generation and agricultural water use have increased. And growth rates for road traffic and for construction in certain tourist areas have matched or exceeded that of GDP.

French expenditure on environmental protection has risen steadily, reaching 1.6 per cent of GDP in 1994. There is no sign of environmental measures having affected the overall competitiveness of the French economy. The private sector is showing an increasingly positive attitude towards environmental protection. The number of jobs related to the environment sector is more than 275 000, or around 1.2 per cent of total employment. Public and private investment expenditure will need to rise still more to meet national or EU objectives, notably for water and waste management. Since the authorities apply the polluter pays and user pays principles, direct and indirect subsidies for environmental protection are generally being reduced gradually.

The National Environment Plan, debated by the Parliament and approved by the Government in 1990, provided an integrated approach to a variety of environmental concerns and allowed France to rapidly put in place strengthened and lasting environmental institutions and funding. A new plan with qualitative and quantitative targets would enable France to continue and step up this first effort at environmental planning at the national level, which has already had highly positive results.

The integration of environmental policies into economic decisions has been approached in different ways according to economic sector. It is very extensive for industry, particularly with regard to the most hazardous, and formerly the most polluting, industrial facilities. This is due partly to the existence of a corps of government inspectors who thoroughly review permit applications and inspect licensed facilities; and partly to the fact that urban planning and civil protection regulations are taken into account from the outset in the licensing process. Policy integration has also been effective in the energy sector. For agriculture and transport, the results of efforts at integration remain insufficient.

It would seem necessary to give priority to abolishing or reducing subsidies that are potentially damaging to the environment, particularly for agriculture and transport. And when the French tax system is overhauled, it

would be advisable to give greater consideration to the environmental effects of fiscal instruments. Efforts at integration would be more effective if government decisions regarding national plans and programmes, infrastructure projects and draft legislation were assessed in terms of their environmental impact.

Since 1977, environmental impact assessments (EIAs) are carried out for a great many projects. Measures have been taken to extend the list of projects, improve the quality of EIAs and increase public participation. France has a long history of public consultation and has introduced new measures to make such consultation more effective and less formal. Public information is regularly made available on the state of the environment, economic aspects or the quality of environmental media, through high-quality summary reports and through publications focusing on particular themes. Innovative work is being carried out on environmental performance indicators.

To promote greater policy integration, it is recommended that consideration be given to the following proposals:

- strengthen institutional mechanisms to encourage better integration of environmental and sectoral policies, notably through environmental impact assessment of plans and programmes and draft legislation;
- draw up a national plan for sustainable development and set quantitative targets for environmental protection, including a breakdown by economic sector;
- continue at all levels of government to specify plans and programmes that contribute to environmental protection;
- pursue efforts to modify consumption and production patterns through appropriate pricing, consumer information, etc.; strengthen and speed the implementation of the policy on the "greening" of government consumption patterns;
- as far as possible, abolish subsidies that are damaging to the environment; catalogue all tax provisions that are unfavourable to the environment and amend them accordingly;
- continue to develop quantitative performance indicators; carry out all necessary measurements of ambient environmental quality and polluting emissions and ensure that information on the environment is widely circulated;
- ensure that all these policies are followed up on a partnership basis and accompanied by a balanced use of regulatory and economic instruments.

Sectoral integration: transport

Many measures have been taken to reduce the environmental impact of transport. For vehicles, the measures include regular mandatory inspections (1992), stricter emission standards (1993), new regulations on noise (1995), increased recycling of scrapped cars and the pending new law on air quality (1996), which should strengthen these measures. France has among the highest road fuel taxes in the OECD, and has introduced cleaner fuels (containing less sulphur and lead). In the past ten years, better account has been taken of the environmental effects of transport infrastructure projects, with improved public enquiry and EIA procedures, the "1 per cent for landscaping" requirement on motorway projects and curbs on noise. The development and construction of public transport using advanced technologies (the high-speed train system, automated urban rail and tramways), as well as support for combined rail-road transport, should also be noted. All these actions have helped reduce the environmental effects of road transport, but have not managed to bring them fully under control.

In France, as in other OECD Member countries, passenger and freight mobility has risen considerably in the past 15 years, stimulated by the growth of trade within France and by European economic integration. As a result, transport, particularly road transport, is exerting considerable pressure on the environment. The transport sector's share of pollutant emissions has risen as emissions from stationary sources have declined and traffic has continued to grow. Photochemical smog in major cities and emissions of fine particulates from a very large diesel vehicle fleet give serious cause for concern over public health. Transport is also the largest single source of noise, which one in four inhabitants cite as a nuisance. Municipal measures to curb private car use have been weak. To achieve sustainable development of transport, integrating environmental concerns, would require stronger measures on vehicles, road fuels, infrastructure and traffic. Such an approach should focus on controlling growth in transport demand, encouraging users to switch to less polluting, safer and more efficient transport modes and adopting a pricing policy under which users would bear all costs of infrastructure and environmental externalities.

It is recommended that consideration be given to the following proposals:

- increase the integration of environmental concerns into transport policy, particularly in the transport planning and programming phases; clarify the contribution of transport policy to the achievement of environmental objectives, particularly those regarding conventional pollutants, noise and the greenhouse effect; set targets for the reduction of emissions in transport;
- develop more rational pricing and taxation of transport to help internalise its environmental costs, notably by raising diesel fuel taxes and the axle tax;
- improve conditions for competition among different modes of freight transport, including by taking account of environmental externalities;
- continue to encourage the provision of economically and environmentally attractive public transport systems in urban areas; introduce regulatory and pricing mechanisms to limit car use in congested areas, e.g. tolls on urban expressways, improved enforcement of parking regulations and greater use of parking fees in major cities; contribute to solving the problems of urban freight transport;
- improve policy co-ordination and the division of responsibilities between the State and the regional and municipal authorities, and promote an intermodal approach to transport;
- continue R&D efforts aimed at developing less polluting, more energy-efficient vehicles, as well as public transport in low-density areas.

Sectoral integration: coastal areas

France has a comprehensive array of legislative and regulatory instruments for the protection of coastal areas. General objectives as well as quantified targets relating to environmental protection have been adopted, such as the conservation of an "unspoilt third" of France's coastal zone and preservation of 40 per cent of its coastline from construction, and quality targets for bathing waters. France has adopted a coastal law banning construction within 100 metres of the foreshore, and has created a Coastal Conservatory to acquire coastal land attractive to developers to ensure that it is properly protected and managed. The conservatory and the authorities have been able to protect 17 per cent of the coastline and restore damaged or neglected sites. France has improved the bacteriological quality of bathing waters; its success rate is one of the best in Europe (over 93 per cent of bathing waters are of good quality). There has been no major oil spill in French territorial waters for 15 years, but in the event of a spill France is equipped to intervene and has developed new ways of combating oil pollution that have proved effective.

There is room for further progress, however. The concept of sustainable development in coastal areas, especially sustainable development of tourism, does not appear to have been understood by certain decision makers, who advocate short-term economic development and increased construction along the coast. The building up of coastal areas, which started in the 1960s, has perhaps slowed since the boom years of the early 1980s, but nonetheless remains significant. No instruments are in place to measure the loss of coastline to development, and financial instruments to discourage development are not being applied widely enough. Most land use plans are not being revised to bring them into line with the coastal law. The preparation of marine resource plans is proceeding only slowly. Progress in combating marine pollution has been uneven. High priority has been given to sewerage and waste water treatment, but efforts to combat pollution by nitrates from agriculture need to be stepped up. The quality of fresh water reaching the sea has hardly changed in ten years. Due to insufficient treatment of waste water, water quality in shellfish beds is not always up to standard. Insufficient progress has been made in identifying natural sites requiring protection. France has not yet met some of its international commitments on discharges of heavy metals and nitrates into the sea.

It is recommended that consideration be given to the following proposals:

- strengthen mechanisms of integration for the actions of different administrations so as to pursue a policy of sustainable development in coastal areas that takes full account of economic potential and nature protection;
- ensure that environmental concerns are integrated into decisions at local level on urban development, infrastructure and tourist activities in coastal areas;
- proceed with the full implementation of the coastal law, notably by increasing funding for preparation of marine resource plans, and bring land use plans into line with the legislation;
- initiate and pursue stakeholder consultation on regional or national action plans for coastal areas, taking account of quantitative targets for strict protection of the coastline and sensitive areas;

- provide increased support to the Coastal Conservatory so as to rapidly conclude planned property transactions;
- make greater use of economic and budgetary instruments to step up protection of coastal areas and reduce the economic disparities among coastal municipalities with a view to achieving sustainable development;
- continue efforts to prevent accidental releases of pollutants and to equip coastal municipalities with sewerage and waste water treatment plants, and complete the equipment of networks with detention basins;
- increase efforts to track trends in urban development, in the protection of sensitive areas and in land-based marine pollution to determine whether quantitative targets are being met.

3. International Co-operation

France is actively participating in international co-operation on environmental protection. It has made and continues to make a significant contribution to the development of international environmental law and has been responsible for many initiatives that have led to exceptional achievements (e.g. the Paris Convention for Protection of the North-east Atlantic Marine Environment, the Mediterranean Action Plan, instruments concerning the protection of the Antarctic and whale sanctuaries). France has met most of its international obligations, including those at EU level, with regard to environmental protection. Once the world's second largest producer of CFCs, France halted such production before the agreed deadline and introduced substitutes. France, a major industrial country, has sharply reduced its CO₂ emissions and set a target of limiting per capita emission levels, which it has already met and is expected to maintain to 2000. While CO₂ emissions will be higher in 2000 than in 1990, overall emissions of greenhouse gases should be brought back in 2000 to the 1990 levels. In terms of cross-border and regional co-operation, France has met its commitments on air pollution and has introduced the instruments needed for enhanced environmental protection at the European level and in border regions. Its achievements in the area of development aid are particularly remarkable: France provides more aid in relative terms than any other G-7 country, and in 1995 it was the second highest donor in absolute terms. The environmental component of this aid is very large. France provides substantial aid to African countries and significant aid to central and eastern European countries. Along with Germany, France proposed the creation of the Global Environment Facility.

Despite the efforts made, progress is still needed. It will not be easy for France to meet the Sofia Declaration target of a 30 per cent reduction in NO_x by 1998. France still needs to make substantial investments to reduce land-based marine pollution, especially as concerns the 50 per cent reduction target for nitrates. France helped draft the Convention on Civil Liability for Activities Dangerous to the Environment, but has not yet signed it. French co-operation with developing countries, notably in the area of environmental protection, is carried out by several ministries; it would be helpful if the public were more aware of this work. The effect of the recent reduction in overall aid levels on environmental aid should be spelt out.

It is recommended that consideration be given to the following proposals:

- ratify and implement recent international agreements on environmental protection (Annex III), particularly those relating to VOCs, EIAs and the protection of the North-east Atlantic;
- deepen cross-border co-operation with neighbouring countries and find a solution to a few practical and legal problems related to the environment that remain in border regions;
- strengthen measures to reduce non-point-source discharges of heavy metals and nitrates into the Channel and the North Sea;
- assess the progress of the national climate change programme; set quantitative targets for greenhouse gas emissions beyond 2000 in the context of international negotiations and define strategies to meet these targets in each sector, notably by stepping up efforts to improve energy efficiency;
- contribute to the development of environmental law with a view to improve its implementation and to adopt international regulations on civil liability;
- carry out regular reviews of all international commitments with regard to environmental protection to determine to what extent they have been implemented in France and whether measures taken to meet international obligations are adequate;
- make more information available on France's international environmental protection activities and work to improve awareness of these activities in other countries.

