



International Environmental Intelligence Brief

DCI Environmental Center

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Contents Page

Articles

Iraq: Saddam's Options for Environmental Destruction [redacted] 1

Brazil: New Environmental Bill Faces Old Challenges [redacted] 2

[redacted] 3

Hazardous Waste Meeting to Address Controversial Trade Ban 5

[redacted] 7

El Niño Impact Limited So Far But Risk Remains [redacted] 8

[redacted]

Calendar 10

[redacted]

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Iraq: Saddam's Options for Environmental Destruction [redacted]

There is no evidence that Saddam plans to spill oil in the Persian Gulf or cause other environmental damage in response to allied attacks on Iraq as he did during the Gulf War. During Desert Storm, much of the damage originated in Iraqi-occupied Kuwait, but Baghdad now would have to damage its own land, water, and oilfields.

- In Kuwait, Iraq ignited oil in deep trenches to slow the allied advance. [redacted]

Iraq would release up to 1.5 million b/d—almost its entire southern daily production—into Gulf waters via its Al Faw and Mina' al oil terminals and from Abu Flus and via the Zubayr waterway. Baghdad could dump oil from tankers under its control and mine several sunken tankers off the coast of Iraq; when sunk in 1991, the largest held 700,000 barrels—much of which has since leaked.

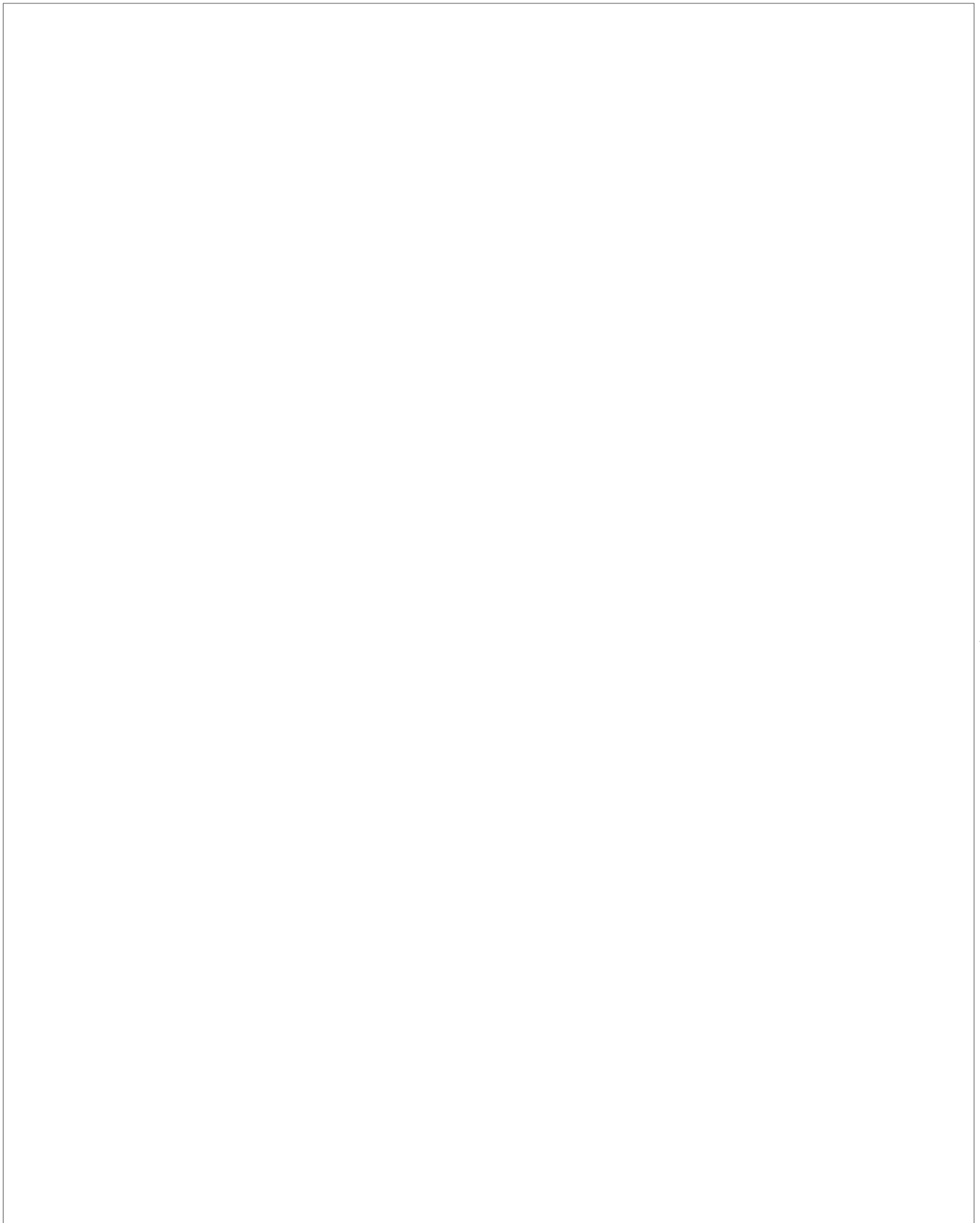
- If Iraq spilled oil near Umm Qasr, the oil could threaten water intakes for desalination and power facilities in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.
- Kuwait City's desalination plant, however, normally is sheltered by seasonal weather patterns and currents. [redacted]

The only sure way to stop oil flows into the waters around Iraq would be to occupy the oilfields and manually close valves at the spill sources. Even if a key pipeline junction were severed using precision

bombing, oil from the rupture could spill into nearby marshlands and make its way to the Zubayr waterway. [redacted]

During Desert Storm, Baghdad dumped about 9-10 million barrels of crude oil into the Gulf from tankers and oil terminals located off of Kuwait. The oil formed a roughly 600-square-mile slick that threatened Saudi desalination plants. One-third of the oil evaporated, much of it sank, and more than 1 million barrels of oil were removed from the Gulf by April 1991,

[redacted]
Nonetheless, about 400 miles of the Gulf's western shoreline were contaminated. In February 1991, the retreating Iraqi Army dynamited 600 Kuwaiti oil wells, spilling or burning an estimated 900 million barrels of crude before firefighters extinguished the last fire nine months later. [redacted]



Brazil: New Environmental Bill Faces Old Challenges

Brazil's legislature late last month passed a long-stalled bill giving the Institute for Environmental Affairs (IBAMA) authority to prosecute crimes against the environment, according to press reports. The bill, first sent to Congress seven years ago, for the first time defines pollution and deforestation as crimes punishable by stiff fines and jail sentences.

Legislators overcame their reluctance to put economic development at risk for the sake of Brazil's international environmental image. Shortly before the bill was passed, government reports revealed massive deforestation, generating unfavorable attention in the domestic press.

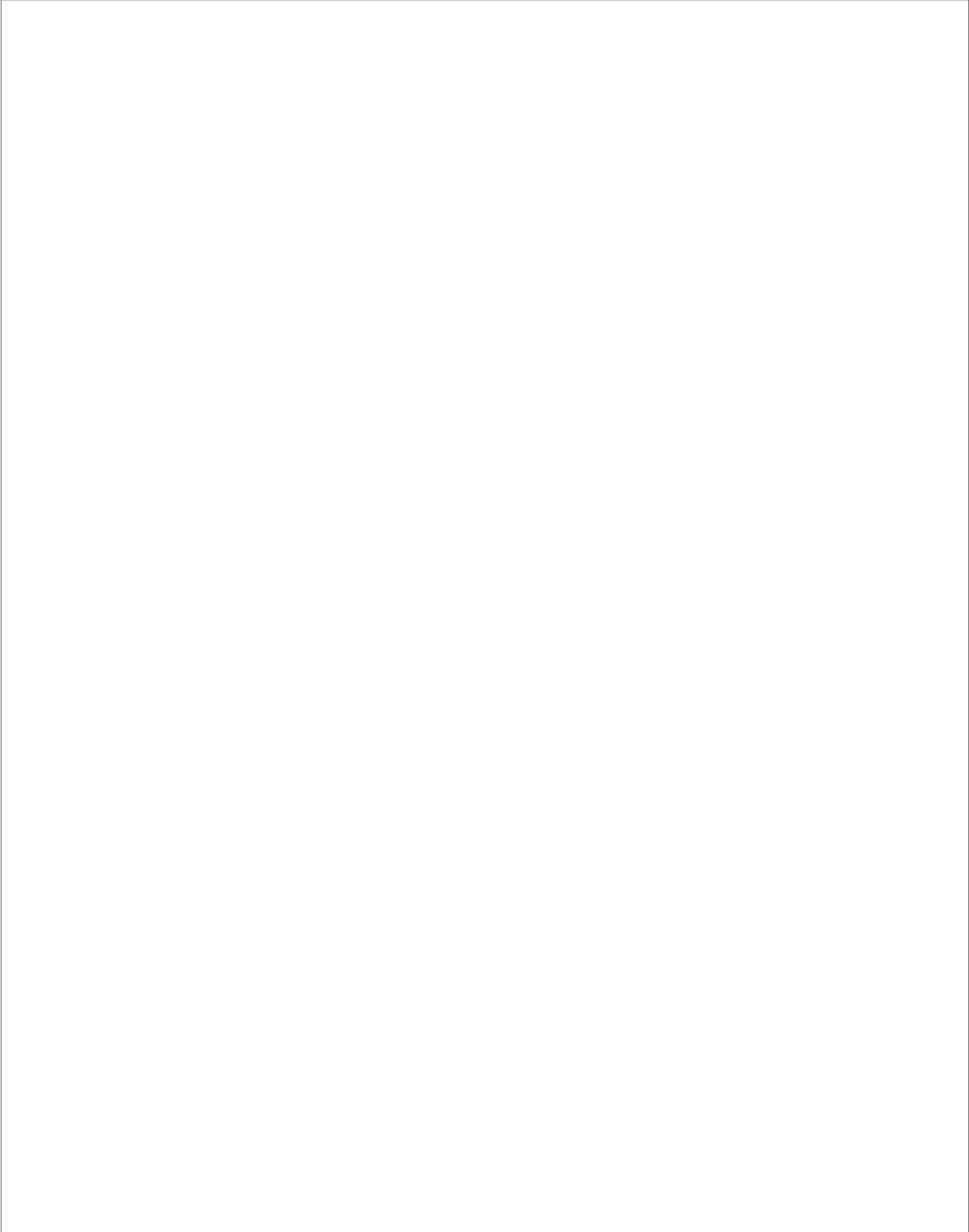
- President Cardoso was an avid proponent of the bill and may have strong-armed legislators in anticipation of his trip to Europe, where leaders have long been critical of Brazil's environmental policy.
- Press reports say Congress—under fire for delaying this bill and other reforms—may have been looking to produce a legislative achievement to improve its image.

Officials are touting the bill as proof of Brazil's commitment to the environment, but leading nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) say the bill offers weak protection and is unlikely to deal with the IBAMA's shortcomings. The bill's final version omitted articles that would have held shareholders responsible for damage

inflicted by their companies and that would have authorized NGOs to take legal proceedings against environmental offenders.

- Government-imposed budget cuts to counter the affects of Asian spillover will compound difficulties in enforcing the new bill.

The IBAMA's report on deforestation last month indicated 60,000 square kilometers of the Amazon—an area twice the size of Belgium—had been deforested in Brazil between 1995 and last year.





**Hazardous Waste Meeting to Address
Controversial Trade Ban** [redacted]

Participants in the Fourth Conference of Parties (COP) to the Basel Convention on Hazardous Waste beginning on 23 February in Malaysia will debate for approval a final list of those wastes that will be banned for export and those that can still be traded for recycling.¹ If the parties agree to adopt the list of waste categories drawn up by the Technical Working Group (TWG), they will ease the debate that began in 1994 when the Basel parties—at the urging of the Nordic countries, China, and many G-77 countries—agreed to ban immediately all hazardous waste shipments from OECD countries to non-OECD countries for disposal, and to ban waste exported for recycling by 1998.

- The debate has centered on whether to include in the ban wastes such as scrap metals, plastics, and paper that are considered by the US and many other OECD countries to be recoverable commodities.
- At the last COP in 1995 some developing countries—led by Brazil, Chile, Korea, and South Africa—broke ranks with the G-77 on the grounds that a total ban would deprive them of cheap secondary materials and contravene WTO free trade rules. [redacted]

Although the OECD to non-OECD country ban still stands, [redacted] a growing number of parties want to incorporate the TWG's waste lists into the legal framework of the Basel Convention as soon as possible.

- At a meeting of the Basel Implementation Committee last June, Chile and the EU, among others, said they support formal adoption of the waste lists. [redacted] These countries, along with Canada and Japan, argue that such an amendment would limit the scope of the controversial ban and end ambiguity over which wastes are banned from trade. [redacted]

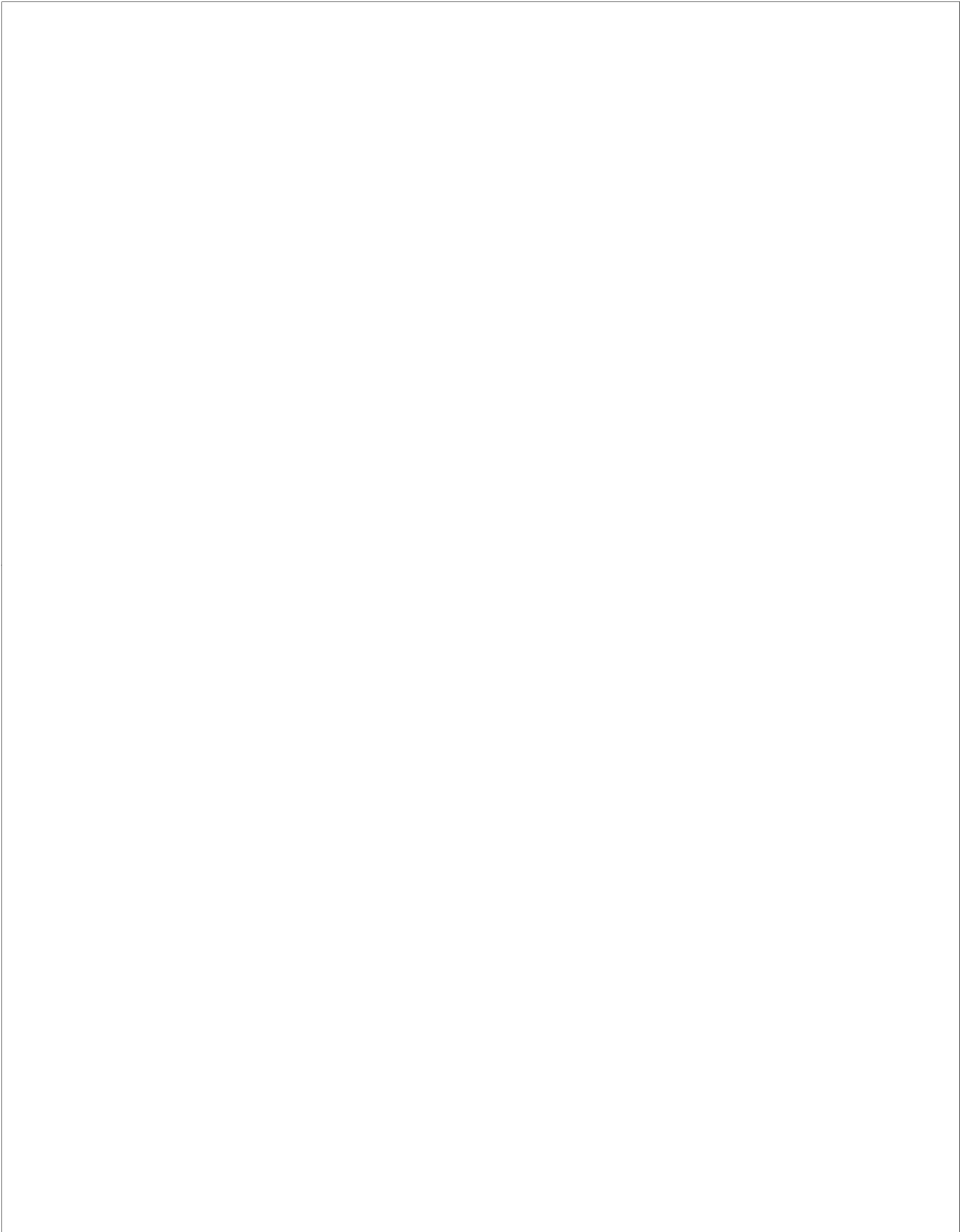
Moreover, agreement may help close loopholes that facilitate unscrupulous waste dealers who trade in illegal hazardous wastes under the guise of recycling and so called "trash for cash schemes."

¹ This article is an updated version of one that was published in September 1997 just before the October COP in Kuala Lumpur was postponed due to the fires.

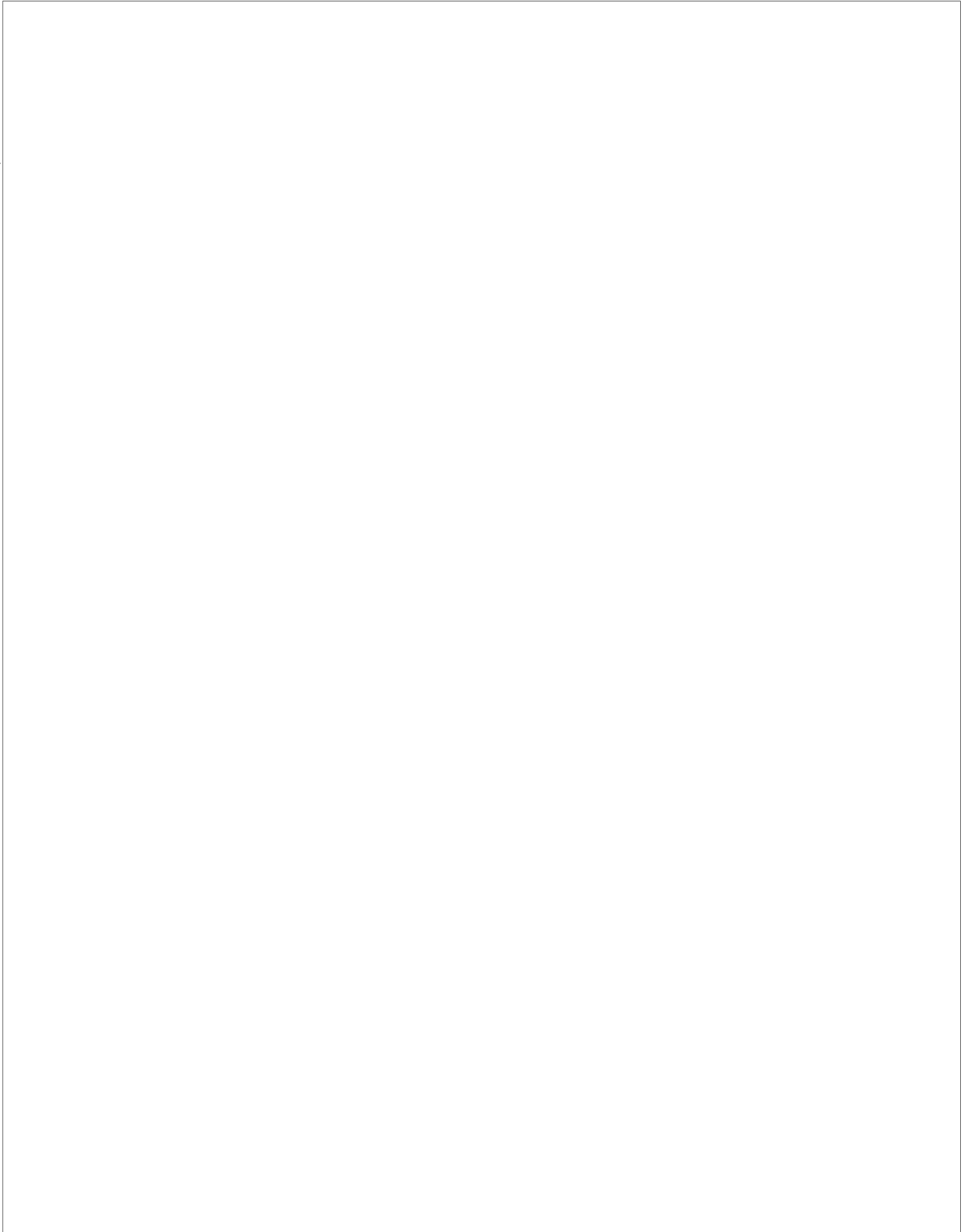
As a non-party to the convention, the US will still be required to develop bilateral agreements in order to export of import wastes for recycling; such bilateral agreements exist with Malaysia and one is being negotiated with Brazil and Singapore.

- [redacted] there is growing support for codification of the convention's Article 11 that will permit bilateral hazardous waste trade agreements to continue. Nonetheless, Denmark and some EU member states insist that once the ban amendment takes effect, OECD countries party to the convention may not trade with one another or with non-OECD countries under Article 11 agreements. [redacted]

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**El Niño Impact Limited So Far
But Risk Remains** [redacted]

Despite concerns about localized drought during the planting season last December, weather conditions in South Africa have remained favorable for crops, including maize, so far this season.

- [redacted] assuming normal weather for the remainder of the growing season, estimates South Africa's 1998 maize harvests will be 6.8 million tons. This is about 25 percent less than last year. South Africa ordinarily produces grain surpluses in good weather years [redacted]

However, because some farmers planted maize by early December in response to El Niño alerts and others waited until late December, the total crop will experience a protracted period in which it is vulnerable to the hot, dry weather common during the South African summer regardless of El Niño's effect.

- Sustained temperatures above 93 degrees—even for just a few days—could reduce the harvest measurably, perhaps to 4 million tons. Such a development would necessitate unusually high maize imports and reduce reserves available for food assistance.
- Output dropped about 60 percent from the average during previous El Niño events. In 1991-92 extensive emergency food relief efforts were required for subsistence farmers in South Africa and elsewhere in southern

Africa; aid was drawn from reserves built up in previous years of surplus.

- A production drop to 4 million tons would force Pretoria to import as much as 2.5 million tons of maize to meet domestic demand and rebuild stocks, at a cost of roughly \$375 million. South Africa would be unable to provide food assistance from its own maize stocks to other southern African countries that have traditionally relied on food imports from South Africa.
- In addition, drought between now and June would sharply reduce next season's wheat area, particularly in the Free State, and push up domestic wheat prices. [redacted]

Given government stocks of 1.1 million tons, Pretoria would be able to meet the 7.6 million-ton domestic consumption requirement and modest export demand should it realize a harvest of 6.8 million tons.

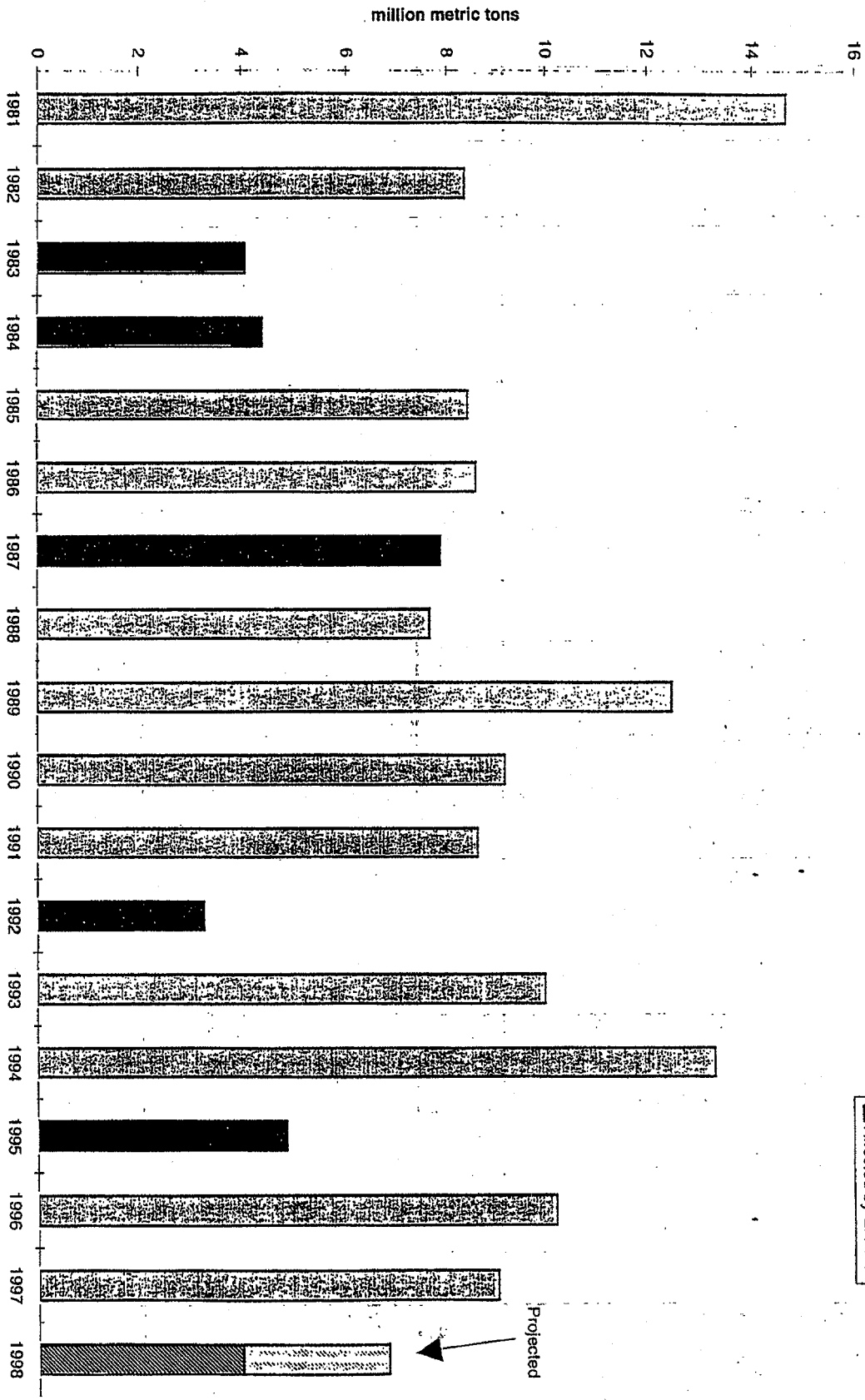
- Localized drought last November and a shift to more drought-resistant crops, such as sorghum and sunflower, have reduced the area planted with maize by about 15 percent from last year, according to the government. The primary reduction is in yellow maize—used mostly as animal feed—because farmers anticipate higher prices for white maize in the event of drought.

- With continued favorable weather, the unusually high percentage of white maize plantings suggests a surplus production of as much as 500,000 tons.

We estimate that, even if drought should still occur, reduced maize production will not lead to famine, although localized food shortages are possible in Mozambique, Malawi, and Zambia. Widespread rains last December and cool early January 1998 temperatures have boosted crop yield prospects, and overall food reserves in southern Africa are much greater than during the 1991-92 El Niño-related drought.



South Africa: El Nino Effect on Maize Production



Selected International Environment-Related Meetings

<i>Date</i>	<i>Forum</i>	<i>Venue</i>
23-27 February	Fourth Conference of Parties to the Basel Convention on Hazardous Waste	Kuching
19-20 March	WTO Committee on Trade and Environment	TBD
23 March	EU Environment Ministers Meeting	Brussels
28 March	Summit of the Americas	Santiago
13-24 April	Sixth Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. Focus on Water	New York
4-5 April	G-8 Environment Ministers Meeting	Leeds
4-15 May 1998	Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity	Bratislava
18-22 May	Eighth Meeting of Parties to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea	TBD
22 May-30 September	1998 Lisbon World Exposition (EXPO '98) Theme: The Oceans, a Heritage for the Future	Lisbon
1-12 June	Subsidiary Bodies of the Climate Change Convention	Bonn
23-25 June	Fourth Environment For Europe Ministerial	Aarhus
30 June	First Global POPs Negotiating Session	Geneva
June/August	Intergovernmental Forum on Forests	TBD
July	Independent World Commission on Oceans	Lisbon
24 August-4 September	Second Conference of Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification	Dakar
1-3 September	APEC Senior Officials Meeting on Environment	Singapore
November	Tenth Conference of Parties to the Montreal Protocol	Cairo
2-13 November	Fourth Conference of Parties to the Climate Change Convention	Buenos Aires