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Cover story: The cover reflects the event of the launch of the UNEP/SETAC Life Cycle Initiative in Prague, Czech Republic on April 28–30, 2002. In 2000, UNEP and SETAC established a joint effort to cooperate for the enhancement of the application of LCA and life-cycle thinking, which means to bring life-cycle thinking and LCA into practice. It is the aim of the Life Cycle Initiative to support the development of cleaner and resource-efficient technologies for a life-cycle economy. In this endeavor, the Initiative links to key themes of the 'World Summit for Sustainable Development' (WSSD) to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, August 26 to September 4, 2002. Four articles deal with the event in Prague and its linkage to the upcoming event in Johannesburg. KLAUS TÖPFER, UNEP's Executive Director (and former Federal Minister for Environment in Germany) has launched the Life Cycle Initiative in Prague. He believes that consumers are increasingly interested in the world behind the product they buy. Life-cycle thinking implies that eve-

ryone in the whole chain of a product's life cycle has a responsibility and, thus, has to take into account all the relevant external effects (see his Editorial on p. 191). HELIAS A. UDO DE HAES (Executive Director for the Initiative) et al. describe background, aims and scope (see pp. 192–195). JIM FAVA (Vice-chair of the International Life Cycle Panel for the UNEP/SETAC Life Cycle Initiative) presents the structure of the Initiative (see pp. 196–198). BAS DE LEEUW (Coordinator Sustainable Consumption, UNEP) and ANNE SOLGAARD (Associated Expert, UNEP) analyze the findings of the session on promoting an life-cycle approach at CP7 (UNEP's 7th high-level seminar on cleaner production) held in Prague (see pp. 199–202). And the papers on pp. 203–218 and 219–224 are examples of how to "develop and disseminate practical tools for evaluating the opportunities, risks, and trade-offs, associated with products over their whole life cycle" (the mission of the Initiative). Cover design: Edwin Grondinger (e.grondinger@abc-media.de).

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