

Jan 24, 2000
ALTERNATIVE BIOSAFETY PROTOCOL

SUPPORT FOR ALTERNATIVE BIOSAFETY PROTOCOL

IS COMING FROM AROUND THE WORLD.
THE SIGNATURES WILL BE PASSED ON TO THE DELEGATES AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BIOSAFETY TAKING PLACE IN MONTREAL CANADA, JANUARY 24-27. SIGNATURES WILL ALSO BE PASSED ON TO THE HONOURABLE DAVID ANDERSON IN VICTORIA ON MONDAY JANUARY 24

NOTE SIGN-ON AT END OF DOCUMENT. PLEASE CIRCULATE FURTHER

ALTERNATIVE BIOSAFETY PROTOCOL- TO PREVENT HARM TO HUMAN HEALTH, BIODIVERSITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

THE PARTIES TO THIS PROTOCOL

RECALLING THAT

at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992), the member states of the United Nations made a commitment to prevent the transfer to other states of substances or activities that are harmful to human health or the environment (principle 14, Rio Declaration);

RECOGNIZING the serious issues raised by genetic engineering in terms of health and safety, the environment, ethical considerations and social justice;"

CONSIDERING the worldwide support for:

- (i) a global ban on genetically engineered processes, foods, crops and animals
- (ii) a global ban on the patenting of life forms as being contrary to the "ordre public" (public interest)
- (iii) criminalizing biopiracy and theft of the genetic material and knowledge of farmers, peasants, and indigenous peoples;

NOTING THAT the precautionary principle affirms that, where there is a threat to human health or to the environment, the lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent the threat. The precautionary principle has long been a tenet of

international customary law and, as such, is required to be integrated into state law

This principle is present in documents in differing forms such as the Rio Declaration:

Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation." (Rio Declaration, 1992). and the Convention on Biological Diversity:

Where there is a threat of significant reduction or loss of biological diversity, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to avoid or minimize such a threat (Preamble, Convention on Biological Diversity, UNCED, 1992).

AWARE OF the evidence of hazards arising from genetically engineering foods and crops reported in the World Scientists Statement presented at Cartagena, Columbia, February 1999:

"* Herbicide resistant transgenes have spread to wild relatives by cross-pollination in both oilseed rape and sugar beet (Brookes, 1999) creating many species of potential superweeds.

* Herbicide-resistant transgenic plants may lead to increased use of herbicides, contrary to what is being claimed. The transgenic plants themselves are already turning up as volunteer plants after the harvest and have to be controlled by additional sprays of other herbicides.

* Bt-toxins engineered into a wide range of transgenic plants already released into the environment may build up in the soil and have devastating

impacts on pollinators and other beneficial insects (Crecchi, C 1998).

* Genetic engineering of organisms is hit- or - miss and not at all precise, contrary to misleading accounts intended for the public, as it depends on the random insertion of the artificial vector carrying the foreign genes into the genome. This random insertion is well-known to have many unexpected and unintended effects, including cancer, in the case of mammalian cells (Walden R, 1991).

* Serious doubts over the safety of transgenic foods are raised by new revelations on the results of animal feeding experiments. Potatoes engineered with snowdrop lectin fed to rats caused highly significant reduction in both dry and wet weights of many essential organs: small intestine, liver, spleen, thymus, pancreas and brain. In addition, it resulted in impairment of immunological responsiveness and signs suggestive of viral infection (Leake, C, 1999).

* Hazards may come from new genes and gene products. New genes and gene products are introduced into food, often from bacteria and viruses and

other non-food species that have never been eaten before and certainly not in the quantities produced in the genetically engineered crops, where they are typically expressed at high levels. The long term impacts of these genes and gene products on human health will be impossible to predict

* Genetically engineered agriculture not only obstructs the implementation of real solutions to the problems of food security for all, but also poses unprecedented risks to health and biodiversity. Far from feeding the world, it will intensify corporate control on food production and distribution which created poverty and hunger in the first place. It will also reinforce existing social structures and intensive agricultural practices that have led to widespread environmental destruction and falling yields since the 1980s (Brown, L R., (1998)"

{Excerpts from the World Scientists' Statement}

RECOGNIZING THAT

the global community has made a commitment to the international principle of customary law-the precautionary principle. This principle states that where there is a threat to human health or the environment, the lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason to postpone measures to prevent the threat.

There is sufficient scientific evidence of the harmful health and environmental consequences of GE foods and crops to justify the banning of GE foods and crops, the end to export of GE foods and crops and the immediate removal of GE foods from grocery shelves in accordance with the precautionary principle.

RECALLING THAT

an exception to the patenting of inventions arises when the invention is contrary to "ordre public" or morality; this explicitly includes inventions dangerous to human, animal or plant life or health or seriously prejudicial to the environment and applies where the commercial exploitation of the invention must also be prevented and this prevention is necessary for the protection of order public or morality;

CONCURRING WITH THE World Scientists Statement that

" Genetic engineering is a new departure from conventional breeding and

introduces significant differences. Conventional breeding involves crossing related species, and plants with the desired characteristics selected from among the progeny for reproducing, and the selection is repeated over many generations. Genetic engineering bypasses reproduction altogether. It transfers genes horizontally from one individual to another (as opposed to vertically from parent to offspring), often making use of infectious agents as vectors or carriers of genes so that genes can be transferred between distant species that would never interbreed in nature. For example human genes are transferred into pig, sheep, fish and bacteria. Toad genes are

transferred into tomatoes. Completely new exotic genes are being introduced into food crops." (World Scientists Statement, 1999)

NOTING THAT

The current practices of genetic engineering are creating unpredictable and irreversible combinations of transgenic organisms with one another and with natural varieties and, as such, are defeating the purpose of the Convention on Biological Diversity;

NOTING THAT under the Vienna Law of Treaties, the signatories to the Convention must not create a situation that would make it impossible for them to discharge their obligations under the treaty and that the creation of unpredictable and irreversible combinations of transgenic organisms with one another with natural varieties would defeat the purpose of the Convention to "conserve biodiversity";

RECOGNIZING THAT

genetic engineering in the area of medical research raises serious questions of ethics and social justice;

RECALLING THAT

Under the UN Convention on Women, Equality, Development and Peace (1995) and Habitat II (1996), the member states of the United Nations made a commitment to ensure that corporations (including transnational corporations) comply with international law, including international environmental law;

MINDFUL that member states of the United Nations have failed to sign and ratify the Convention on Biological Diversity along with other relevant treaties, covenants and conventions, and that under the Vienna Law of Treaty states are bound not to do anything in the interim between the signing and the coming into force of the treaty to defeat the purpose of the convention;

HAVE AGREED TO THE FOLLOWING:

- * to invoke the precautionary principle and institute an immediate ban on all genetically engineered processes, foods, crops and animals;
- * to embark upon the immediate removal of GE foods from grocery shelves;
- * to invoke the "ordre public" principle and ban the patenting of living organisms and their parts;
- * to criminalize biopiracy and theft of genetic material and knowledge of farmers, peasants, and indigenous peoples;
- * to place a moratorium on genetically engineered medical research into

uses of genetic engineering until ethical standards can be put in place;
* to urge the full ratification of the Convention on Biological
Diversity and the enactment of domestic legislation to ensure compliance.

PLEASE SEND COPY TO

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Global Compliance Research Project

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