

Unwanted Technology Transfer – Genetic Pollution in Centres of Genetic Diversity

Hope Shand, ETC group

Over two years ago, scientific evidence first came to light showing that Mexico's traditional maize crop is contaminated with DNA from genetically modified maize, despite a government prohibition on the planting of GM seeds in Mexico. Mexican indigenous peoples and peasant farmers, the creators and custodians of maize, consider this contamination to be one of the greatest attacks on their cultures, economies and livelihoods.

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SUBMISSIONS: Welcome from all. Please give to Jessica Dempsey at NGO meeting, or email to:
jdempsey@interchange.ubc.ca.

NGO/IPO/CBO Meetings

Daily, 9-10 am, Level 5
Come one, come all

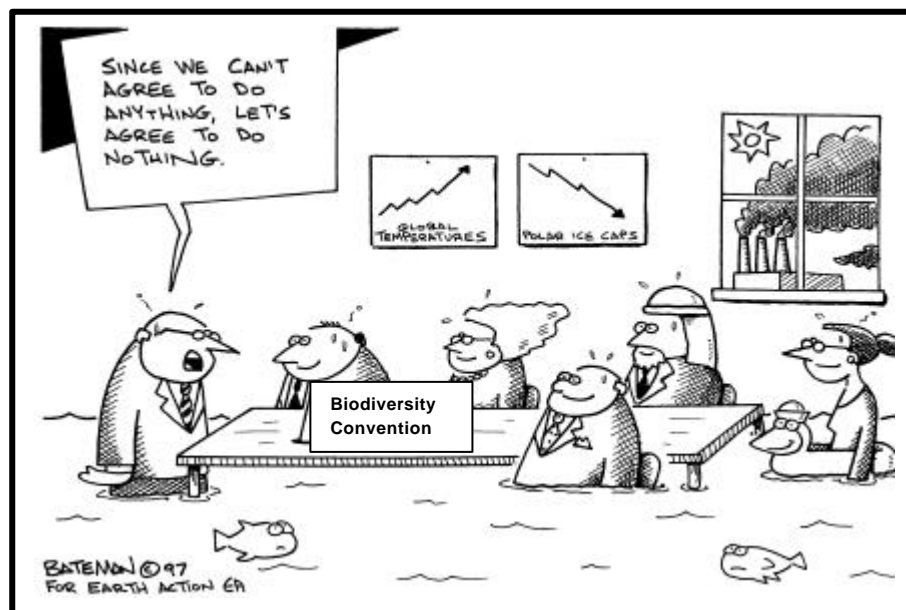
Special NGO Meeting about COP 7

Friday
8.30 AM, Level 5

In October 2003 peasant farmers and indigenous communities along with civil society organizations in Mexico publicly released the results of their own testing that found GM contamination of native maize in at least nine Mexican states – far more serious and widespread than previously assumed.

The long-term impacts of GM contamination on crop genetic diversity are not known. Neither governments, nor international institutions have taken action to stop GM contamination and to protect farmers and indigenous peoples' livelihoods. The presence of patented traits in farmers' maize is particularly worrying because biotech companies are aggressively prosecuting farmers for patent infringement.

Contamination of farmers' varieties is a potential threat to all centres of crop biodiversity. Pending the adoption of comprehensive strategies to stop contamination and protect the integrity of farmers' crop genetic diversity, we urge COP7 to call for an immediate moratorium on the release of genetically modified seed or grain in crop centres of origin and/or diversity. For more information: www.etcgroup.org



How Export Controls Conflict with Technology Transfer Under the Convention on Biological Diversity

The Sunshine Project

NGO Intervention on Item 4.2 Technology Transfer and Cooperation

At SBSTTA, Parties talk about technology transfer as if it is simply a question of defining a need, establishing a regulatory framework, and pulling together the financial resources to acquire a technology relevant to the goals of the convention.

But, in fact, many of these technologies - particularly, but not exclusively, the hard technologies - are simply not available to much of the developing world. These technologies are denied to the South through the mechanism of Export Controls.

To be concrete: This Convention talks about Parties obligation for technology transfer to, for example:

- produce biological controls to reduce the impact of invasive alien species.
- facilitate bioprospecting (by the South, in the South), to screen plants for useful biochemicals... for example, to treat infectious disease.
- biomanufacturing, a possible sustainable use, for example, in bioremediation, or manufacturing technologies such as those used by the Diversa Corporation.

Yet the infrastructure, some materials and, to a lesser extent, the knowledge necessary to perform these activities in the South is often denied to many countries through export controls (restrictions on technology sharing) imposed by a private club of mainly North countries, a club not backed by a treaty, a club called the Australia Group. This club includes the United States, Western Europe, and other countries such as Japan and Australia. (See: <http://www.australiagroup.net>)

In practice, it works as follows: A developing country requests a certain biological-related technology, usually a hard item; but instead of receiving the technology, it receives a letter from the country that owns the technology that simply says "no". This letter does not explain why the technology is denied and, in fact, that explanation may even be classified. The reasons do not relate to intellectual property, they instead reflect the desire by exporter to deny particular technologies that are deemed sensitive to many developing countries.

SBSTTA may move forward with recommendations on the transfer of technology for many such applications; but there is a fundamental unreality to such recommendations so long as the CBD does not assess how the Australia Group conflicts with technology transfer obligations under this Convention. Accordingly, in discussing and acting upon enabling environments (or, in this case a disabling environment), in your discussion here and at COP VII, the CBD must initiate consideration of export control systems and how the Australia Group negatively impacts Parties' obligations to transfer technology relevant to the CBD's objectives.

If the CBD does not grapple with the difficult issue of export controls and help to bring this system into a genuinely multilateral (i.e. treaty) system, then it will be unable to effectively implement its technology transfer provisions because critical technologies will continue to be arbitrarily denied to the South by the Australia Group. <http://www.sunshine-project.org>

Big Thanks to O le Siosiomaga Society, Samoa

Civil society groups have an increasingly prominent and powerful role in biodiversity issues. Kofi Annan recently complimented the sector for its courage, character, and vision. Why? Many of these groups are crucial to actually implementing the well-meaning (but often ephemeral) international policy and law, like the CBD. Here we want to highlight grassroots organizations that are walking the talk of the biodiversity convention. And we say: Kudos to you O le Siosiomaga Society!

O le Siosiomaga Society (which means The Environment Society in Samoan) was established in 1990 and is the only environmental NGO in Samoa. It is dedicated to environmental advocacy, village community awareness raising, village communities capacity building, appropriate technology transfer for sustainable development activities. Their approach to biodiversity conservation is participatory and community based. In 1994, O le Siosiomaga Society joined together with Uafato Village to establish the Uafato Conservation Area. This conservation area protects some of the last remaining Ifilele trees on the island, trees important to Samoan people. This year, the society will begin a major avifauna project to find and map the elusive, and endangered (red-listed) tooth-billed pigeon. A member of this organization, Shane Wulf is at SBSTTA tracking important issues to Samoan people, particularly climate change and invasive species. He can be contacted at [shane_wulf@yahoo.com]. Thanks to Shayne and O le Siosiomaga Society for actually implementing the articles of the CBD on the ground!

Prime Opportunities to Protect Life on Earth Today

Greenpeace is using this SBSTTA 9 meeting to illustrate the urgent need for more and better protection of life on earth. On day one Greenpeace activists unfurled banners that read: "Protect Life on Earth today", while three Ents, the giant living trees that fought against their destruction in Lord of the Rings - The Two Towers, welcomed government delegates from around the world to the Meeting.

Delegates were also greeted with video footage on two big screens showing pictures of Greenpeace protests in Toronto and Santiago de Chile against plans by the Canadian company, Noranda, to build an Aluminum plant in an unprotected rainforest area in Patagonia, Southern Chile. Noranda intends to erect six large-scale dams to power a destructive aluminum smelter that would release 1.5 million tones of solid and gaseous wastes every year into the heart of pristine Patagonia. There is significant evidence that the Alumysa project will have a devastating impact on Patagonia. A new Greenpeace Report: A Life of Crime, revealing decades of environmental destruction and contamination by the multinational, was released in conjunction with activities in Santiago de Chile and Toronto last week.

On day two delegates were exposed to further video evidence of the destruction of the world's ancient forests, in this case the invasion of unprotected forest land by powerful loggers and cattle ranchers in the Eastern Brazilian Amazon in the state of Para. In Para, local communities dependent on intact rainforest and living off hunting, fishing and small-scale agriculture are driven off their land as the forest is destroyed. Last week, Greenpeace released a new report: State of Conflict, which shows ongoing rainforest destruction and related human rights violations in the Brazilian Amazon.

Each of these examples demonstrates the urgent need for countries to recommend a strong program of work for protected areas, with strict targets and timetables, to be adopted at the 7th Conference of the Parties in February in Kuala Lumpur. In particular, countries must agree to a moratoria on all industrial-scale activities in large protected areas as a first step towards their protection, and perhaps even more importantly, commit sufficient funds to ensure that a global protected areas network becomes a reality, as well as ensuring meaningful participation and involvement of indigenous peoples.

The loss of the world's wealth of biodiversity is occurring at an unprecedented rate. In recognition of this fact, governments, at the last Conference of the Parties in the Hague, and also at the World Summit for Sustainable Development, committed to the goal of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. The proposed Program of Work for Protected Areas currently before the SBSTTA is the opportunity to turn this commitment into action. Governments need to act on this commitment now, or there will be little chance of meeting the 2010 goal.



Photo of the Brazilian Amazon, Greenpeace



Leaders of Traditional Livestock and Pastoral Communities, government representatives, Civil Society Organizations with a focus on livestock genetic resources, academics and livestock researchers met in Karen, Kenya from 27 – 30 October, 2003. They issued a statement as follows:

Karen Commitment: Pastoralist/Indigenous Livestock Keepers' Rights

We call on governments and relevant international bodies to commit themselves to the formal recognition of the historical and current contribution of pastoralists and pastoralism to food and livelihood security, environmental services and domestic animal diversity.

We also demand that they recognise the contributions of pastoralists and other livestock keepers, over millennia, to the conservation and sustainable use of animal genetic resources for food and agriculture including associated species and the genes they contain (AnGRFA).

Furthermore, we insist that there is international legally-binding recognition of inalienable Livestock Keepers' Rights and the Rights of their communities to:

- continue to use their knowledge concerning the conservation and sustain-able use of AnGRFA, without fears of its appropriation
- participate democratically in making decisions on matters related to the conservation and sustainable use of AnGRFA
- access, save, use, exchange, sell their AnGRFA, unrestricted by Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) and [modification through] genetic engineering technologies that we believe will disrupt the integrity of these genetic resources
- have their breeds recognised as products of their communities and Indigenous Knowledge and therefore remain in the public domain
- benefit equitably from the use of AnGRFA in their own communities and by others.

We call on the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN (FAO) to start negotiating such a legally-binding agreement, without delay, ensuring that it will be in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity.

We further call on the FAO to develop a Global Plan for the conservation and sustainable use of AnGRFA by pastoralists, other livestock keeping communities and relevant public institutions.

Finally, we insist that AnGRFA be excluded from Intellectual Property Rights claims and that there should be a moratorium on the release of genetically-modified livestock until bio-safety is proven, in accordance with the Precautionary Principle. We call on relevant institutions concerned with food, agriculture, trade, intellectual property and animal research to provide assurances and such legal protection as is necessary to sustain the free flow and integrity of AnGRFA, vital to global food security and the environment.
