

## **IUCN – WORLD CONSERVATION UNION CALLS FOR MORATORIUM ON FURTHER RELEASE OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS**

**For immediate release  
Bangkok, Thailand, 22 November 2004**

### **World Conservation Congress approves moratorium on further release of genetically modified organisms.**

Members of the IUCN 2004 World Conservation Congress voted today to approve a moratorium on the further release of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) until such time that they can be demonstrated, beyond reasonable doubt, to be safe for biodiversity, human health, and the health of livestock. Nearly seventy percent of the nations and non-governmental organizations voted for the moratorium, even after several days of intensive behind-the-scenes lobbying by agribusiness interests.

"This is a great day for biodiversity, human health, and food security world-wide," said Mr. Antonio Claparols of the Ecological Society of the Philippines, the sponsor of the resolution. "Until it can be shown that GMOs pose no near- or long-term threat to life on Earth, we must invoke the Precautionary Principle."

The resolution provides a clear mechanism for undertaking a state-of-the-science report, to be delivered within one year, presenting current knowledge on the development, dispersal, and impacts of GMOs.

Responding to suggestions for amending the resolution during the Plenary debate, Mr. Tashi Tsering, delegation head of Tibet Justice Center and a co-sponsor of the resolution, said "We welcome the amendments proposed by our friends from Senegal. There is an especially strong need for disseminating information about GMOs to developing countries."

"The Senegalese amendment sent a clear signal," said Mr. Alec Marr, of the Australian Wilderness Society and a co-sponsor of the bill. "IUCN must not only promote and share sound science, it must also use transparent, participatory governance in bringing this knowledge to the rest of the world."

The unregulated rise of GMOs world-wide in recent years has led to concern among scientists and government officials alike. Scientists are learning that GMOs know no boundaries, degrading genetic diversity of crop seeds and then expanding beyond farmscapes into adjacent areas of biodiversity. In the process, they degrade complex soil ecology and habitat for beneficial insects, thus affecting mammals and birds and killing the very biodiversity that GMO proponents claim to care about.

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#### **ABOUT IUCN:**

IUCN is the world's largest environmental organization. It is composed of governments, NGOs, and individuals. Its members from some 140 countries include 77 States, 114 government agencies, and 800-plus NGOs. More than 10,000 internationally-recognized scientists and experts from more than 180 countries volunteer their services to its six global commissions. Its 1000 staff members in offices around the world are working on some 500 projects. For more than 50 years this Green Web of partnerships has generated environmental conventions, global standards, scientific knowledge and innovative leadership.

*"IUCN builds bridges between governments and NGOs, science and society, local action and global policy. It is truly a world force for environmental governance."*

*– Achim Steiner, IUCN Director General.*

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## **FULL TEXT OF THE RESOLUTION CGR3.RES011 (minus amendments)**

### **A moratorium on the further release of genetically modified organisms (GMOs)**

RECALLING that the IUCN Intersessional Programme Framework adopted at the 2nd IUCN World Conservation Congress (Amman, 2000) included a request to play a major role in identifying and defining issues that affect biodiversity and that attention be paid to environmental impacts of biotechnology;

APPRECIATING that Resolution 2.31 (Genetically Modified Organisms and biodiversity), which was adopted at the 2nd IUCN World Conservation Congress (Amman, 2000), noted two key concerns regarding GMOs, namely:

- (a) the potential for significant reduction or loss of biodiversity, as a result of releases of GMOs into the environment; and
- (b) the potential role of GMOs in "achieving global food security" which it notes "have not been adequately demonstrated so far";

NOTING that there has been a promotion of GMO products worldwide, especially in developing countries, with little or no controls on their entry into national or regional markets; and that there is growing concern over their safety for human and animal health;

FURTHER NOTING that a balance must be made between the potential negative impact GMOs have on biodiversity and human and animal health on the one hand and the positive benefits they may have in achieving global food security;

RECOGNISING that the precautionary approach as set out in Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development is not an overarching one but rather an aspect in the evaluation and management of risks relating to GMOs;

AWARE that the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety has incorporated the precautionary approach in determining risk management as to what is an acceptable level of risk;

OBSERVING that GMO use and introductions are controlled primarily by the private sector, whose incentives for development and marketing may be greater than for assessing potential problems;

AWARE of the public concern that GMO technology needs to be more transparent particularly in the biosafety area; and

WELCOMING the Key Result Areas in the draft IUCN Intersessional Programme 2005–2008 which take into consideration the impact of GMOs on biodiversity, such as calling upon key private sector companies to integrate biodiversity into their corporate social responsibilities and actions;

The World Conservation at its 3rd Session in Bangkok, Thailand, 17-25 November 2004:

1. CALLS for a moratorium on further environmental releases of GMOs until they can be demonstrated to be safe beyond reasonable doubt;
2. REQUESTS the Council to prepare policy guidance for sustainable GMOs through a multifaceted approach during the next intersessional period;
3. REQUESTS IUCN to promote and support initiatives to ratify the Cartagena Protocol on Biodiversity; and
4. URGES IUCN to encourage public awareness and promote access to information.

Sponsors:

Ecological Society of the Philippines, Philippines  
Environmental Foundation Ltd. (Sri Lanka), Sri Lanka  
Centre for Sustainable Development, Bangladesh  
Ochránársje a kultúrne združenie poiplia, Slovakia  
The Wilderness Society, Australia  
Tibet Justice Center, USA  
Združenie Národných Parkov a Chránených Uzemi Slovenska, Slovakia  
Slovenska Ekologická Spoločnosť, Slovakia  
DAPHNE-Institut aplikovanej ekológie, Slovakia  
Statná ochrana prírody Slovenskej republiky, Slovakia  
Danmarks Naturfredningsforening, Denmark  
Al-Khat Al Akhdar (Green Line Association), Lebanon

RWG COMMENT:

This motion should be considered with the motion entitled CGR3.RES061 - Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and Biodiversity. Given the policy implications, the preamble should reflect the different sides to the GMO debate and note the position statement Council has adopted.

This motion and CGR3.RES061 are referred to an ad hoc contact group to: a) assess the perspectives provided by each, and b) prepare a consolidated draft. If the consolidated text implicates the Programme, the motion will be referred to the Programme Committee for assessment.