

Second intervention from global STOP GE Trees Campaign

Author: Lucy

Sharratt<info@cban.ca><p>The following presentation was made at the Ninth Conference of the Parties of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in Bonn, Germany. The Parties at this convention are considering the suspension of any plantings of genetically engineered trees. This intervention was made in support of this effort by Anne Petermann, Co-Director of Global Justice Ecology Project and Co-Coordinator of the STOP GE Trees Campaign.</p><p>Thank you madam chair</p><p>I speak on behalf of Global Forest Coalition, Global Justice Ecology Project and the STOP GE Trees Campaign, which includes 137 organizations in 34 countries all over the world- including public interest scientists, foresters, geneticists and many in the very communities threatened by the release of genetically engineered trees.</p><p>We would like to speak to paragraph 1.(r). We want to strongly support the position of the African Group with regard to paragraph (r) in support of the suspension of any release of GE trees. This is the only decision that makes sense due to the unassessed, irreversible and potentially disastrous impacts of GE trees on forest biological diversity, forest dependent and indigenous people and women, soils, water and the climate. Since MOP has referred this issue to an AHTEG and the risks are currently unknown but potentially catastrophic, this body is clearly mandated to adopt the first paragraph and suspend future plantings of GE trees, which has also been the unified position of NGOs and IPOs present here.</p><p>The enhanced destruction of forests that would result from the commercialization of GE trees will take a very high toll, not only on wildlife and biodiversity, but on forest-dependent and indigenous communities and women.</p><p>While we are speaking in support of the first paragraph 1r, we support the following amendment: the beginning of the paragraph should be changed to refer to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, "which specifically deals with issues of genetic engineering". This is also extremely important since the Precautionary approach under principle 15 of the Rio Declaration is significantly weaker than precaution as set out under the Cartagena Protocol. As any reference to precaution under Rio would seriously undermine the precautionary approach, it is critical that this reference to Rio be removed from all parts of the text.</p><p>If COP-9 falls short of suspending the release of GE trees, by COP-10 it may be too late. By then, there could well be large-scale releases of GE trees, which would likely be already causing many of these serious and irreversible impacts of which we have previously spoken. Parties that support the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, and commit to biodiversity protection, cannot simultaneously allow the release of GE trees.</p><p>Thank you.</p>