

# Canada Opposes a Global Moratorium on GE Trees and Contributes to Delay in Action at UN

Author: Lucy Sharratt<info@cban.ca><p>Bonn, May 30 2008-

Today in Bonn Germany, the Canadian Government's opposition to abide by African countries to establish a global moratorium on genetically engineered (GE) trees contributed to a devastating lack of action at the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. </p><p>Canadian groups represented at the UN meeting that ended today worked closely with other groups and Indigenous peoples' organizations from around the world to support the African continent's proposal to suspend any releases of GE trees. The prolonged fight over GE trees was part of an extremely controversial meeting that also debated the impacts of biofuel production on biodiversity. </p><p>Canada was largely a silent accomplice because Brazil and Colombia took the lead to stop the moratorium, said Lucy Sharratt, Coordinator of the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, present at the meetings. Canada also felt the pressure of Canadians who wrote and called the Minister of the Environment. </p><p>A moratorium at the UN level would have been the most effective way to protect global forests from transboundary contamination from genetically engineered trees, said Sharratt. Governments have a responsibility under this international environmental agreement to make sure that their actions do not cause damage to the environment of other states. </p><p>However, while governments did not take collective international action to stop GE tree releases at this meeting, they have recognized that national moratoria are a reasonable action to deal with the risks of GE trees. </p><p>47 Canadian groups signed a letter to the Minister of the Environment, John Baird, asking Canada to support a global moratorium. Although both the Minister and the Prime Minister briefly attended the meeting, they did not speak about GE trees. The Convention on Biological Diversity has already recognized the specific and serious risks of GE trees. </p><p>Despite the outcome at the UN meeting, concern about GE trees is growing among governments, organizations and people's movements around the world. The Women of La Via Campesina, the international small farmer movement, announced that they will take up the campaign to stop GE trees, and all groups present at the UN meeting re-pledged their commitment to stop the release of genetically engineered trees. </p><p>For more information: Lucy Sharratt, Coordinator, Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, cell in Germany 0114915112272774, coordinator@cban.ca </p>