

**A Statement by Signed by 89 Canadian Civil Society Organizations on the Matter of Canada's Signification and Ratification of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity**

September 2000

On January 29, 2000 the final text of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity was adopted by consensus of an Extraordinary Conference of the Parties to the Convention. The adoption of the final text was the final outcome of more than four years of difficult negotiations, and represented a major step forward in the protection of global biological diversity.

The Protocol was opened for signature on 24 May, 2000 at the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Nairobi, Kenya, and will remain opened for signature until June 4, 2001. The Protocol will enter into force 90 days after it is ratified by the 50th country. This is expected to occur before the sixth meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) parties in April 2002.

To date 71 countries have signed the Protocol. Canada is not among these nations. Canadian civil society organizations were frequently embarrassed by the role played by Canada in the negotiation process. As lead spokesperson for the six-member Miami Group of countries, Canada was seen to place its perceived economic interests in the export of genetically modified agricultural products ahead of the protection of global biodiversity and public health. These actions caused significant harm to Canada's reputation within the Convention, more generally, the activities of the United Nations Environment Program as a whole.

Canada's failure to sign the Protocol to date reinforces the view that Canada is prepared to place the protection the environment, biological diversity and human health, at risk in the pursuit of its trade objectives. This is particularly evident given that several other Miami Group members, including Argentina and Chile, have now added their signatures to the Protocol.

Canada's lack of action to date fails to recognize the level of concern that now exists around the world regarding the safety and acceptability of genetically modified crops. What export markets for these products which may have existed, are in decline. Furthermore, Canada's continued unwillingness to accept the need to effectively and credibly segregate genetically modified crops from conventionally produced grains is resulting in the loss of export markets for non-genetically modified products as well. These market realities have been acknowledged by the Canadian Wheat Board and others, and should inform Canada's approach to the signing and ratification of the Protocol. Failure to move forward quickly on the Protocol's adoption and implementation will simply reinforce the level concern which already exists in the international marketplace regarding the safety of Canada's agricultural exports.

Canada's long-term interests in the protection of the environment, biodiversity conservation and its agricultural export markets now lie with the signing and earliest possible ratification of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. We therefore urge the Government of Canada to add its signature to the Protocol immediately, and to proceed with ratification before the sixth Conference of the Parties to the Convention in April 2002.

Action Réseau Consommateur  
Academic and Community Cooperation for Environmental Sustainability (ACCES)  
Alberta Forest Conservation Association  
Atlantic Association of Professional Naturotherapists  
Biotech Action Montréal  
Biotech Working Group (Manitoba Eco-Network)  
Blue Green Society  
Calgary Animal Rights Coalition  
Campaign for Pesticide Reduction- New Brunswick  
Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment  
Canadian Biotech Action Network  
Canadian Environmental Network - Biotechnology Caucus  
Canadian Labour Congress  
Catholic Health Association of Canada  
Canadian Health Coalition  
Canadian Health Institute  
Canadian Institute for Environmental Law & Policy  
Canadian Park And Wilderness Society - Edmonton Chapter  
CAW Local 102  
CAW Local 111  
Centre de recherche et d'information en consommation  
Centre populaire de Roberval  
Cho!ces  
Citizens Concerned About The Future Of The Etobicoke Waterfront (Inc.)  
Citizens for Renewable Energy  
Citizens Voluntary Labelling Collective  
Clearinghouse Group  
Conservation Society of Hamilton and District  
Cooper Institute  
Dairy Education Board  
David Suzuki Foundation  
Earth Action  
Falls Brook Centre  
Edmonton Friends of the North Environmental Society  
Elcom Systems Partners  
Environmental Coalition of PEI  
Environmentalists Concerned Over Land Issues  
Essex County Medical Society  
Fiends of the Farewell  
Food Action Ottawa  
Ford Alward Naturalist Association  
Global Community Centre  
Gord Graff Publishing Inc.(www.goodmagazine.com)  
Labour Environmental Alliance/Association de Biodynamie du Québec  
Greenest City  
Greenpeace Canada  
Grizzly Rafting Club  
GROUP (Get Rid of Urban Pesticides)  
Guideposts for a Sustainable Future  
International Institute of Concern for Public Health  
Island Residents Against Toxic Environments  
L'ACEF des Bois-Francs  
Lennox and Addington County Citizens Concerned about Water Resources  
MacKillop Centre for Social Justice  
Manitoba Medicare Alert Committee  
Napanee Citizens Concerned About Water Resources

National Coalition for Health Freedom  
Nature Saskatchewan  
Ontario Women's Health Network  
Ontario Public Interest Research Group (at Guelph)  
P.E.I. Health Coalition  
P.E.I. local committee of OXFAM  
P.E.I. Pie Brigade  
P.E.I. Women's Network  
Pembroke Area Field Naturalists  
Peterborough EcoCouncil  
Physicians and Scientists for Responsible Genetics  
Poetical Asylum (PEI)  
Polaris Institute  
Quebec Public Interest Research Group (at Concordia)  
Quebec Public Interest Research Group (at McGill)  
Quebec Public Interest Research Group (at Montréal)  
Reach for Unbleached!  
Service budgétaire et communautaire de ChicoutimiService d'aide au consommateur de Shawinigan  
Sierra Club of Canada  
Sierra Youth Coalition  
Sierra Youth Coalition (P.E.I. Chapter)  
Sierra Youth Coalition (Dalhousie Chapter)  
Society Promoting Environmental Conservation  
StopCancer Ontario  
The Clearinghouse Group  
The Council of Canadians  
The Green Campus Society  
The Ram's Horn  
Tropical Conservancy  
Urban Ecology Centre  
Vegetarians of Alberta Association  
Women's Health and Environments Network  
Youth Action Network