

2.31 Genetically Modified Organisms and biodiversity

WHEREAS there is widespread concern that genetically modified organisms (GMOs) could have potentially dangerous effects on living organisms and their ecosystems;

AWARE of the growing movements throughout the world opposing genetic modification and aware of rejections of genetic modification in agriculture and food production;

WHEREAS, in particular, releasing genetically modified organisms into the environment may pose a threat of significant reduction or loss of biological diversity;

MINDFUL of the obligations undertaken by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and welcoming the adoption of the *Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety* to the Convention on Biological Diversity and calling for its early ratification and implementation;

NOTING that potential effects of GMOs for achieving global food security have not been adequately demonstrated so far;

RECALLING the principles expressed in *Caring for the Earth: A Strategy for Sustainable Living* published jointly by IUCN, WWF, and UNEP in 1991; and

RECOGNIZING the lack of knowledge on the effects on biodiversity of GMOs and the consequent importance of applying the precautionary approach as set out in *Principle 15* of the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* and as reflected in the *Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety* and in numerous international treaties;

The World Conservation Congress at its 2nd Session in Amman, Jordan, 4–11 October 2000:

1. URGES IUCN's members to apply the precautionary principle in their respective regions regarding further releases of genetically modified organisms into the environment;
2. REQUESTS the Director General to
 - (a) support initiatives to implement the *Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety*; and
 - (b) propose to Council options for an IUCN contribution that will advance leadership, research, analysis, and the dissemination of knowledge regarding the potential ecological impact of the release of genetically modified organisms into the environment, focusing especially on biodiversity, socio-economic impact, and food security.

This Resolution was adopted by a show of hands. The delegations of the State members Australia, Canada and New Zealand and the State and Agency members United States abstained from the adoption of this Resolution. The delegation of Canada provided a formal Statement for the Record indicating that the delegation had formally objected to an amendment changing the words "precautionary approach" to "precautionary principle". The full statement of the Canadian delegation is contained in the Congress Proceedings.

The delegation of the United States provided a formal Statement for the Record indicating inter alia that “the Resolution taken as a whole still appears to prejudge, in a negative and unbalanced manner, the question of the potential risks and benefits of biotechnology”. The full statement of the US delegation is contained in the Congress Proceedings.