

UN Biodiversity meeting in Bonn, May 2008

Dear friends,

This is a call for action due to the fact that next year in May the UN Biodiversity meeting MOP4 and COP9 will take place in Bonn in Germany. Maybe not all of you know what those nice abbreviations stand for and mean?

MOP

* The 4th Meeting of the Parties (MOP4 or 'Fourth Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety') will be held from the 12th until the 16th of May. This is part of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), a result of the UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, in the time that environment was still a hot topic. This Cartagena Protocol is about transport and handling of GMOs.

COP

* The 9th Conference of the Parties (COP9 or 'Ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity') will be held from May 19 to 30. The central themes that will be discussed inside the meeting are:

- developing forest and marine protected area systems,
- new instruments for financing protected areas,
- agricultural biodiversity and biosafety matters,
- new regime on access and benefit sharing related to genes, wild plants and crops. This is often a struggle between big companies on one side and small farmers and indigenous people on the other.
- implementing the convention to obtain the 2010 target. As we know nearly all member states are far away to achieve it.

What we can do

In general those UN meetings are important policy events where industry and the countries with mainly intensive large scale agriculture try to push through the changes and legislation they want. A company like Monsanto, Cargill or Syngenta will be able to send a much larger delegation as a country from the south where small scale agriculture is crucial for the food and livelihood of a majority of the population.

Partly we can follow the developments inside and try to react on that. But we see those UN summits mainly as an occasion to spread our general critics on the large scale, export based, industrial agriculture. In Bonn the scientists, media and policymakers are gathered so we can try to share our concerns with them. A podium to show our more social and environmental alternatives for food production.

Practically it is important to stop or frustrate the work of the big companies and their lobby groups. We have maybe not much confidence in the politicians inside, but together with 'big business' it can always become worse.

It is good to realise that some members of the delegations from southern countries are more progressive and more critical about capitalism than the western NGOs. It will be good show some support for those delegates and to give them a stage outside. Otherwise they will get lost in the media-circuses of big development and nature conservation NGOs, companies and politicians of western countries.

Experiences from the past

In the past there have been various actions and counter summits during the COP-meetings. For example during the COP6 in 2002 in Den Haag the activist group 'Resistance is Fertile' organized actions, events and workshops. Just for inspiration a selection of the events that took place:

- presentations of representatives from the South,

- *Common Ground* meetings with farmers and consumers about possible alternatives for the farming and food production in Europe,
- guerrilla gardening: planting food crops and herbs in parks and open spaces to get normal people more involved in food production and to improve their knowledge about food production,
- street theater,
- workshops about all kind of issues, campaigns and action technics. Among them: GMO-trees, corporate lobby groups, anti-gmo actions, seed saving, European Agriculture Politics (CAP), WTO and trade issues,
- showing documentaries about related issues.

Once more to be clear; this are just some things done during the COP some years ago. Also in the Brazilian town Curitiba in Brazil in 2006 a counter summit and actions took place. There many groups of small farmers and indigenous people were present.

Planning for Bonn

What will and can be done in Bonn depends on the people and groups interested. It is also a possibility not to focus only on Bonn but to do things locally in several towns and countries.

Issues to highlight in Bonn that are mentioned so far are agrofuels, seed saving, off course gmo's and in general to hook on to the issues peasants and small farmers in the South bring in.

If you are interested to do something related to this issue or when you are even thinking about organizing or joining events during the summits in Bonn, don't hesitate to contact us. Also, if you know people that are active in this context we would kindly ask you to forward this appeal and have them contact us. We as Involved so far are some small groups and individuals in Germany and A SEED. A SEED will not be able to be the main organiser of the side events. But all together we can make our points about a social and sustainable future for our food production clear next year May in Bonn.

During an international preparation meeting later this year we hope to become more concrete and take some clear decisions.

Please reply to <anton [at] aseid [dot] net> or <flip [at] aseid [dot] net>. Thanks!!