

Rue Mauverney 28  
CH-1196 Gland  
Switzerland  
Tel ++ 41 22 999 0000/01  
Fax ++ 41 22 999 0002  
Email: [mail@iucn.org](mailto:mail@iucn.org)  
[www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)



## To all IUCN NGO and INGO members

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Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are becoming more and more prevalent in our society. The technology is being used in many sectors, from agriculture to health and energy supplies. Members of The World Conservation Union (IUCN) have acknowledged this growing trend and, while noting the potential of GMOs to improve livelihoods and promote development, have expressed concern regarding the potential negative impacts of GMOs on food safety and the environment through Resolutions at the 3rd World Conservation Congress. Such negative impacts may include a reduction in biodiversity, unexpected consequences of gene transfer between plants and through creating pests or weeds that are resistant to controls.

The Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity have recognized both the potential benefits and risks of GMOs through their Cartagena Protocol. The Protocol promotes informed and cautious use of this technology and works to build capacity in all countries to support the decision making processes involved. IUCN Members support this protocol through World Conservation Congress resolutions WCC 3.007 and WCC 3.008.

The United Nations organizations responsible for human health and for food production have found no evidence to date of negative impacts of GMOs on biodiversity or human health.

Though scientists to date have found no conclusive evidence of direct negative impacts on biodiversity or human health of GMOs that have been released for commercial use, other ethical issues need to be considered. Many organisations share similar views to those of Via Campesina, a worldwide movement of peasant farmers, that "GM technology poses a serious and immediate threat to our life security and livelihoods, our food security, health of the environment and the people. We recognize that this is being thrust on us solely to promote the interests of agri-business corporations". As the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) highlights, "current investment in biotechnological research tends to be concentrated in the private sector and oriented towards agriculture in higher-income countries." Poor farmers, who potentially may have the most to gain from GMO technologies, will only benefit if they have access to the right technology developed in an appropriate way.

While it may be too early to accurately assess all the effects (both good and bad) of GMOs, IUCN remains concerned about their potential impacts on biodiversity and human health. The IUCN Council requested the IUCN Director General to write to you and bring your attention to the World Conservation Union resolution WCC 3.007 that calls for a moratorium on GMOs "until these can be demonstrated to be safe for biodiversity, and for human and animal health, beyond reasonable doubt". Therefore, we request all governments and businesses to employ a precautionary approach and to not employ GMOs unless all reasonable assessments to ensure no detrimental impact for biodiversity and human health are undertaken.

A copy of the resolution is attached for information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ibrahim Thiaw', written over a white background.

Ibrahim Thiaw  
Acting Director General