



planetdiversity

WORLD CONGRESS ON THE FUTURE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE **BONN GERMANY** 12-16 MAY 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Berlin, 28 April 2008

For regional biodiversity – against global monocultures **Participants at demonstration, festival and Planet Diversity Congress** **campaign for biodiversity**

To mark the beginning of negotiations on the UN Cartagena Biosafety Protocol in Bonn, Germany, “Planet Diversity” will bring together guardians of biodiversity from around the world. On May 12th they will welcome UN convention delegates with a demonstration and festival “for biodiversity – regional, fair and GMO-free!” More than 80 farmers, development and environmental organisations will support the demonstration, calling for a radical change in agricultural policy. The message of the recent IAASTD report on world agriculture is clear: industrial agriculture with its vast monocultures, factory farming and use of pesticides and genetic engineering cannot sustainably combat hunger in the world.

“We need a new agriculture,” said Benedikt Haerlin, lead organiser of the Planet Diversity congress. “One billion people are starving,” he said, “and although the current protests are mainly taking place in the cities, most of the world’s hungry live in rural areas. We cannot afford monocultures any longer, with their massive input of fertilizers and pesticides.” Genetic engineering is no solution, nor is patenting of seeds which prohibits the traditional exchange of seeds – and with it the exchange of ancient knowledge.

“We stand at a crossroads,” declared Georg Janßen, executive director of the German Family Farmers Union AbL, which is organising the demonstration. He maintains that radical changes are needed to support small farmers on a global scale. Yet the German government with its one-sided promotion of the agricultural industry wants to keep things just as they are until 2013. Genetically modified plants are no solution as they only increase farmers’ dependency on the agricultural industry. “We call upon the German government, the governments of the federal states and the German Farmers Union to reconsider. The future belongs to small-scale farming, not to industrial agri-business. We want to emphasise quality: healthy, GMO-free foods instead of industrial mass produce.”

The organisers will not allow the countries of the Northern and the Southern hemisphere to become divided over these issues. To strengthen international cooperation they have called for an international rally and demonstration in Bonn on 12 May 2008.

The demonstration’s demands are almost the identical with those of the IAASTD report on world agriculture: against global monoculture, against agro-fuels and international fuel speculation, against experiments in genetic engineering, bio-piracy and patents on life. For the preservation of regional biodiversity with the free exchange of seeds and knowledge.

Speakers at the final rally include two Right Livelihood Award laureates: Indian physicist Vandana Shiva and Canadian farmer Percy Schmeiser, who was sued by chemical giant Monsanto for

patent infringement after his fields were contaminated by genetically modified pollen.

Following the demonstration, a Festival of Diversity will take place from 2 –10 pm in the Bonn Rheinaue Park. With a colourful program and activities for all ages, the Planet Diversity festival will inform the general public about the loss of biodiversity in the world's fields, stables and kitchens. International conference-goers will participate along with many local, regional and national farm, environmental, development and food and agriculture related groups.

“This festival will appeal to all senses, with something for everyone: a children's area with a petting zoo and games, cinema and theatre, live music as well as varieties of plants and delicious food from the region and around the world,” explained Ute Sprenger, from a member organization of the Planet Diversity coalition. A celebration of the UN -designated “Year of the Potato” will take place in its own thematic pavilion, and the Bolivian Ambassador will speak from the main stage on the importance of the potato in his country.

A multicultural program will be presented on two stages, with live music, dance, cabaret and talk with agricultural and environmental experts from around the world. The talent will include: Bolivian and Haitian dancers; Russian speed folk; rock and classical music; jazz and Afro beats; Latino bands and Japanese drummers. Well-known cabaret artist Gregor Lawatsch will appear, as well as bands from a high school rock band competition. Songs such as the "Love Song for Linda (the Potato)" and a homage to the Schwäbisch-Hällische pig will passionately demonstrate that in Germany too, agriculture must change to prevent further reduction in the diversity of crops and farm animals.

The demonstration and festival will kick off the three -day Planet Diversity conference, an international gathering of 500 participants from 80 countries addressing key issues regarding local and regional biological and cultural diversity to support rural innovation and guarantee food sovereignty and food safety. The plenary sessions will be translated into four languages. More than 30 workshops over the three days will focus in on the issues and consider strategies and actions for the future.

Contact:

Anna Gyorgy
Bonn office coordination, English language press
Planet Diversity
c/o IFOAM
Charles-de-Gaulle-Str. 5, 53113 Bonn, Germany
Tel: 0049 (0) 176 53 51 71 86
a.gyorgy@planet-diversity.org
www.planet-diversity.org

Background information:

Planet Diversity Congress Program:

<http://www.planet-diversity.org/programme.html>

Press, registration and contacts: <http://www.planet-diversity.org/press.html>

12 May 2008:

Demonstration: <http://www.planet-diversity.org/demonstration.html>

Meeting place: 10:00 am, Rheinaue Park Bonn

Festival of Diversity <http://www.planet-diversity.org/festival.html>



International pavilions and stories, music, theatre, talks, films, activities, children's program, dance and regional specialities from around the world. Showing the film "The World According to Monsanto" (German version) by filmmaker Marie Monique Robin.
2 pm to 10 pm, Rheinaue Park, Bonn

13 to 15 May 2008:

International Congress on the Future of Food and Agriculture

Plenary sessions, information exchange and more than 30 workshops on food sovereignty and access to healthy food, seeds, water and land; fair consumer relations; GMO -free regions; patents on life and genes; biofuels; indigenous knowledge, women and diversity. The congress takes place at the Gustav Stresemann Institute, Bonn.

Speakers include among many others World Food Prize laureate and co-president of IAASTD Hans Herren, the Right Livelihood Award laureates Vandana Shiva, Percy Schmeiser, Farida Akhter and Royoko Shimizu, Jakob von Uexküll of the World Future Council, scientists such as Miguel Altieri, president of the Latin-American Society for Agroecology, Ulrich Köpke, president of the International Society of Organic Agriculture Research, theologian and biologist Günter Altner and biologists Christine von Weizsäcker and Florianne Koechlin.

16 May 2008:

Public presentation of the congress findings, excursions and follow-up meetings.