



Statement from the Civil Society from Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia

DO NOT DENY OUR RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE ON DECISIONS ON GMOs! APPROVE THE "ALMATY AMENDMENT" NOW!!

Almaty, Kazakhstan, 24 May 2005. Civil society from Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA), present at the 2nd meeting of the Parties of the Aarhus Convention in Kazakhstan, call on Governments to approve the "Almaty amendment", which will secure our rights to be informed and to participate in decisions on GMOs in our region.

GMOs pose significant challenges to our health and our environment. The potential risks of GMOs are serious and may be irreversible. The risks are not simply hypothetical - multiple cases of illegal contamination of GMOs have occurred around the world. It is urgent that people in the EECCA region have the right to be informed and to participate in GMO decisions in our region.

We are therefore extremely disappointed and concerned by the attitude of the European Union (EU) delegation in the current discussions on GMOs in the Aarhus Convention, which is trying to pressure other countries to agree on the most minimal right of participation on GMO decisions. This attitude is paradoxical since the EU itself has one of the world's strongest biosafety frameworks and has always spoken in favour of strong biosafety provisions. However, it is attempting to deny the EECCA region the possibility to use the Aarhus Convention to introduce comprehensive provisions on public participation on GMOs.

The EU's approach is hypocritical and outrageous, and shows that it does not take seriously the concerns repeatedly expressed by our civil society and our governments over the last four years. Rather, the EU appears to be acting as the puppet of the biotechnology industry.

We believe that the Aarhus Convention is an important complement to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, which we believe needs also to be urgently ratified and for comprehensive biosafety frameworks to be implemented at the national level. Our view is shared by the Secretariat of the Biosafety Protocol, which has stated that the Aarhus Convention is playing an important role in promoting public participation in GMO decision-making, and that the outcomes from the Aarhus Convention processes will contribute significantly to the consideration of the subject matter under the Biosafety Protocol.

We urgently call on all the Parties and Signatories of the Aarhus Convention to ensure that the "Almaty Amendment" becomes a reality and that public across the whole of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia are assured the right to participate in decisions on GMOs.

Signed by:

Eco-Tiras, Moldova

Green Dossier, Ukraine

Green Movement of Georgia-Friends of the Earth, Georgia

GUTA Association, Eastern-Central Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia

The Mountain Club, Kazakhstan

Ecolex, Azerbaijan

Globus, Kazakhstan

Ecom, Kazakhstan

Armon, Uzbekistan

Biom, Kyrgystan

Logos, Uzbekistan

Gebma, Georgia

Ecospectrum, Moldova

Center for Regional Development-Transparency International, Armenia

Armenian Women for Health and Healthy environment, Armenia

Women for Sustainable Development, Central Asia

Nature Protection team, Tajikistan

Caucasus Environment, Georgia

Pelikan, Moldova

Ecopravo-Lviv, Ukraine

Environmental Law organization EcoPravo-Kyiv, Ukraine

Ecodom, Belarus

EPHA Environmental Network

Global and local information partnership, Kyrgystan

Partnership Initiative, Kyrgystan

Environmental Organization for the sake of Earth, Tajikistan

TETA XAZRI, Azerbaijan

OYR, Azerbaijan

Ecoforum Kazakhstan

Living Environment, Ukraine

Green Women, Kazakhstan