

# CAMPAIGN FOR COMMUNITY CONTROL OVER BIODIVERSITY

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April 27, 2007

**To  
The Honourable Prime Minister, Sri Manmohan Singh  
South Block  
New Delhi 110 001  
Tel: 011 23014161**

Subject: Resolutions from over 3000 Gram Panchayats, Local Institutions and Community Representatives demanding greater control of communities over biodiversity in the implementation of the Biodiversity Act, 2002.

Dear Sir,

This is with regard to the Resolutions you have received from over 3000 Gram Panchayats, Local Institutions and Community Representatives from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, and Meghalaya in the past month, raising specific concerns related to community control over biological diversity. We are sure that many more Gram Panchayats from other states will also be sending you similar resolutions. Attached with this letter, is a copy of the covering letter that you would have received with the most recent bunch of resolutions, for your reference. Also attached is what the resolutions in different languages are attempting to say, in English.

Through these resolutions the panchayats wish to draw your attention to a matter of decentralized governance that holds significance for the lives of millions of farmers, forest-dwellers, fishers, and pastoralists in India. Specifically, the Panchayats have resolved not to constitute Biodiversity Management Committees (BMC) as mandated by the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, as its relevant rules (2004) completely undermine the role communities can play in the conservation of Biodiversity.

As you are aware, communities have an intrinsic link with natural resources, in particular biodiversity, for both survival and livelihoods. It is therefore important, to sustain this link and in the spirit of decentralized governance, to ensure greater community control over biodiversity and over the traditional knowledge that such communities have evolved.

The Panchayats have come together as part of the Campaign for Community Control over Biodiversity for the second time. Many Gram Panchayats had sent similar resolutions to the Union Minister of Environment and Forests in December 2004 and also submitted a memorandum with their concerns during a meeting with the Minister. However, no action was taken in this regard.

This called for an action by many non- governmental organizations, people's movements and community representatives across the country. A series of events, including workshops, rallies, farmers' meetings, have been organized in various parts of India.

Their aim has been to review the Biodiversity legislation & other associated laws and policies (including Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act and the Seeds Bill), and press for community control over biodiversity and biodiversity conservation. These events emphasized the fact that these legislations are not a result of community demand and worse still, do not favour their interests. And while they have been introduced with a conservationist spirit, their implementation has been largely dealing with commercial transactions of biodiversity.

Towards this direction, Gram Panchayats in India have passed resolutions expressing their dissatisfaction over the Biodiversity Acts and the way these Acts are taking away the control of community over their resources. We are enclosing herewith a list of 1436 resolutions representing 1433 Gram Panchayat Sarpanches and 860 traditional institutions from five States viz., Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Meghalaya, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh. Apart from these 1500 resolutions from only Orissa have been sent directly to you from Grampanchayats, Tribal Organisations and Community Representatives. We are sure that your office would have surely received similar resolutions from other states, which we have no centralized record of. These clearly reflect the community voices protesting against the decreasing space for community participation and control over biodiversity.

We urge you to consider this matter with urgency and direct the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests to seriously consider revising the legislation towards ensuring greater community control and involvement in decision-making around biodiversity.

Yours sincerely,

Campaign for Community Control over Biodiversity