

SOUTHERN ACTION ON GENETIC ENGINEERING

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PRESS RELEASE

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A two day Afro Asian Conclave called ***BT COTTON & BEYOND, Status and Implications of GE crops and Post GE technologies for small farmers in Africa and Asia*** which met at the National Institute of rural Development has called for a renewed Asian African Solidarity where if at all Technology and Ideology has to cross borders they have to be of the people, for the people and by the people

The conference held on January 16 and 17, 2012 under the auspices of SAGE [Southern Action on Genetic Engineering] was attended by scientists, researchers, farmers, environmentalists, food sovereignty activists from Benin, Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire [all in West Africa], Canada, Burma, Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Phillipines besides Indian participants from several states.

Eminent scientists such as Dr P M Bhargava, Dr Vijayan [formerly Chair, Kerala Biodiversity Board], Dr Andreas [Chair of the Biosafety Committee of Indonesia] addressed an inaugural panel on *Scientific Promises and Farming Realities*.

The scientists were unanimous in their view that ***“Since GMOs are not based on sound, scientific principles in the biological science (organic evolution) they were tampering with the natural process of organic evolution, it shall not be accepted at any time”***.

Thereafter the Conclave took stock of the GE experience in all the participating countries and in a Joint Declaration said that ***“Biodiverse, organic agriculture is the best way to feed the world. GE crops are not a solution to either climate change or achieving food security for a growing world population. GE crops require large chemical inputs and take the control of seeds out of the hands of farmers”***, thus debunking the biotech industry claims that GE in agriculture was necessary for “feeding the world”

The participants, through the Declaration demanded that ***“It is the duty of the government to work on precautionary principles and hold corporates responsible for their acts based on ‘polluter pays’ principles”***

The Conclave also discussed post GE technologies such as Nano Technology, Geo Engineering, Synthetic Biology – all designed on extreme scientific imaginations which threaten people’s control of their food and farming and also posing a great danger to environment.

The Declaration affirmed that *“WE STRONGLY BELIEVE IN FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AS RIGHT OF PEOPLE TO PRODUCE THEIR OWN FOOD, HAVE CONTROL OVER THEIR FOOD SYSTEMS, THEIR OWN KNOWLEDGE, AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES, RESPECT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT. WE INSIST ON UPHOLDING THE RIGHTS OF COMMUNITIES OVER THEIR RESOURCES, KNOWLEDGE AND KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS”*

All the participants decided to use the opportunity of the declaration of 2014 as UN Year of Family Farms as a platform to work together in their advocacy of ecological agriculture and a global moratorium on GE crops and animals

They also decided to work for grassroots level awareness creation on these issues and prepare action plans to 'SAY NO TO GMOs' rooted in local realities

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P. V. Satheesh', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

[p v satheesh]
National Convener

PEOPLE WHO ADDRESSED THE MEDIA MEET

AFRICA

1. **Ms Bernadette P. Ouattara**, *INADES FOUNDATION, BURKINA FASO*
2. **Mr Ram Christophe**, *COPAGEN, BURKINA FASO*
3. **Mr René M. SEGBENOU**, *COPAGEN, BENIN*
4. **Mr Francis F. Ngang**, *COPAGEN, COTE D'IVOIRE*

BURMA

1. **MS Kamoon**, *Ethnic Community Development Forum [ECDF]*
2. **Mr Tim Tin**, (Poe Kwa), *Pa-O Youth Organisation*
3. **Mr Soe Doh**, *Karen Environment and Social Action Network [KESAN]*
4. **Mr Shang Phun**, *Burma Relief Centre*

CANADA

1. **Mr David Bruer**, *Co Manager, InterPares, a Social Justice Organisation*
2. **Mr Eric Chaurette**, *Co Manager, InterPares, a Social Justice Organisation*
3. **Ms Lucy Sharatt**, *Coordinator, CBAN [Canadian Biotechnology Action Network]*