

The DivSeek program: The Seed Treaty Undermined by the Gangrene of Biopiracy

Saturday 31 October 2015 (Date first published: 15 October 2015).

La Via Campesina Press Release

(Harare, October 15, 2015) After a week of arduous debates at the FAO headquarters in Rome, on the 9th of October, The Governing Body of the International Seed Treaty [\[1\]](#) in its sixth session had to choose between plague and cholera: to accept as fait accompli its irregular "governance arrangements", to say the least, or to sink into an open crisis.

To prevent immediate burst, it has declared valid:

The commitment of its secretariat to the DivSeek program that organizes biopiracy at a global level. DivSeek's aim is to sequence the genomes of all varieties stored in gene banks [\[2\]](#). This program is working towards is the electronic publication of genetic information on seeds entrusted to the gene banks for which the Treaty is responsible without including any prohibition to patent nor to share benefits, thus violating the rules of the Treaty.

A resolution leaving farmers without any possibility to defend themselves against this violation of their rights, which nevertheless are stipulated in the Treaty. Patents on genetic information published by DivSeek will indeed prohibit farmers to continue to grow the seeds they have graciously given to the collections for which the Treaty is responsible.

The renewal of the contract of its secretary general, which was carried out in secret, thereby violating of its own rules of procedure.

Since the ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992, the seed industry has accumulated a huge debt by tapping into the huge reservoir of peasant seeds collected in fields worldwide without sharing any of the profits generated. In 2013 in Oman, the Treaty's Governing Body required the seed industry to find a fair solution. Two years later, no progress has been made. To the contrary, with DivSeek, the industry organizes further pillage by letting all the seeds, in their dematerialized form, escape from the Treaty's control, so as to enable patenting without any restrictions.

La Via Campesina expects a strong reaction from all the governments, which in Rome have witnessed these unacceptable diversions from the Treaty's objectives, so that it be put back on the right track. La Via Campesina hopes that the next consultation on Farmers Rights (article 9 of the Treaty) organized by Indonesia in 2016 will make these rights a priority, guaranteeing food sovereignty against the theft of seeds by industry's industrial property rights.

P.S.

* “The Seed Treaty Undermined by the Gangrene of Biopiracy”. Published on Thursday, 15 October 2015 21:20:

<http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/main-issues-mainmenu-27/biodiversity-and-genetic-resources-mainmenu-37/1886-the-seed-treaty-undermined-by-the-gangrene-of-biopiracy>

Footnotes

[1] International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

[2] DivSeek is an international program which seeks to cut up genetic sequences of the plant genetic resources stored in gene banks to publish these in electronic databases. Patents taken out on genetic sequences enable the ownership of all plants that contain those sequences and which have a related characteristic.