

Notes for Presentation to Victoria Council on the GE-Free Motion

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Mayor and Council,

We are living in a wake of corporate/government negligence from previous harmful substance that were once deemed safe for human health and the environment. The precautionary principle has been ignored or misinterpreted since its inception. Given the unattended consequences of genetically engineered foods and crops, and the global commitment to the precautionary principle it becomes an imperative to institute a GE -Free world.

Sadly the renowned geneticist, Dr Mae Won Ho recently died. Her research has been spurned by the pro-GE Industries. I would like to refer to her work;

In 1998 Mae Wan Ho published Genetic Engineering: Dream or Nightmare? This book has been widely acknowledged as providing the most sustained and reasoned challenge to many of the scientific assumptions underlying genetic engineering. In the book, she examined the social and political implications of the involvement of genetic engineering science with big corporate business and called for a halt to commercialisation and for an independent public enquiry into the hazards involved.

In 1999, Mae-wan Ho, as the founder and director of the Institute of Science in Society initiated the world Scientist Letter to All Governments, which affirmed the following:

The precautionary principle is accepted as the basis of the Cartagena Biosafety Protocol. The principle is to be applied to all GMOs whether used as food or as seeds for environmental release, and exclaimed that there is indeed sufficient direct and indirect scientific evidence to

suggest that GMOs are unsafe for use as food or for release into the environment.

And that is why more than 300 scientists from 38 countries are demanding a moratorium on all releases of GMOs.

The letter further proclaimed:

We, the undersigned scientists, call for the immediate suspension of all environmental releases of GM crops and products, both commercially and in open field trials, for at least 5 years; for patents on living processes, organisms, seeds, cell lines and genes to be revoked and banned; and for a comprehensive public enquiry into the future of agriculture and food security for all.

In 1999, Vandana Shiva organized the international Biodevastation II Conference in Delhi. At the conference, I worked with Mae Wan Ho on drafting the following statement that was endorsed by all but one of the participants:

- (i) A global ban on genetically engineered foods and crops;**
- (ii) A global ban on the patenting of life forms;**
- (iii) An end to the exploitation of the knowledge of farmers, peasants and indigenous peoples;**
- (iv) A global support program for promoting organic agriculture and other forms of ecological farming, and for instituting a fair and just transition program for affected farmers and communities.**

In 2003, at the first meeting of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB) Mae-wan Ho, addressed the delegates *recommended* that “Pro-GM scientists should only be allowed to continue with their research in the laboratory and not turn the whole world into their open laboratory and subject everyone to the risks. Let scientists do more research in a contained environment instead of rushing to commercialise their products”.

She also stated: “Scientific Committees advising governments are playing fast and loose with scientific evidence, abusing public trust, and in blatant violation of both good science and the precautionary principle”.

In 2013, she circulated a petition supporting the research done by Seralina, through issuing the Open Letter on Retraction and Pledge to Boycott Elsevier

In conclusion, genetically engineered food and crops have contaminated the global food system and undermined food security. The institutional Collusion, in relation to genetically engineered food and crops, among corporations, governments, universities and regulatory agencies has been endemic.

For the sake of food security for present and future generations: (i) this collusion must end; (ii) the precautionary principle must be invoked, (iv) genetically engineered food and crops, banned; (v) the charters of Monsanto et al, revoked; and (vi) charges of gross/criminal negligence against these corporations, levied. AND The UN General Assembly should invoke article 22 and set up an international Tribunal to investigate allegations made against Monsanto, Dow, Syngenta, Pioneer HiBred, Calgene, Ciba-Geigy, Asgrow, Zeneca, Aquabounty, symbio and to revoke their charters

For food security of future generations , and for the environment, we must all work for a GE-Free world. With the full invocation of the precautionary principle, hopefully this will happen. And in passing this important motion the city of Victoria will be playing its part.