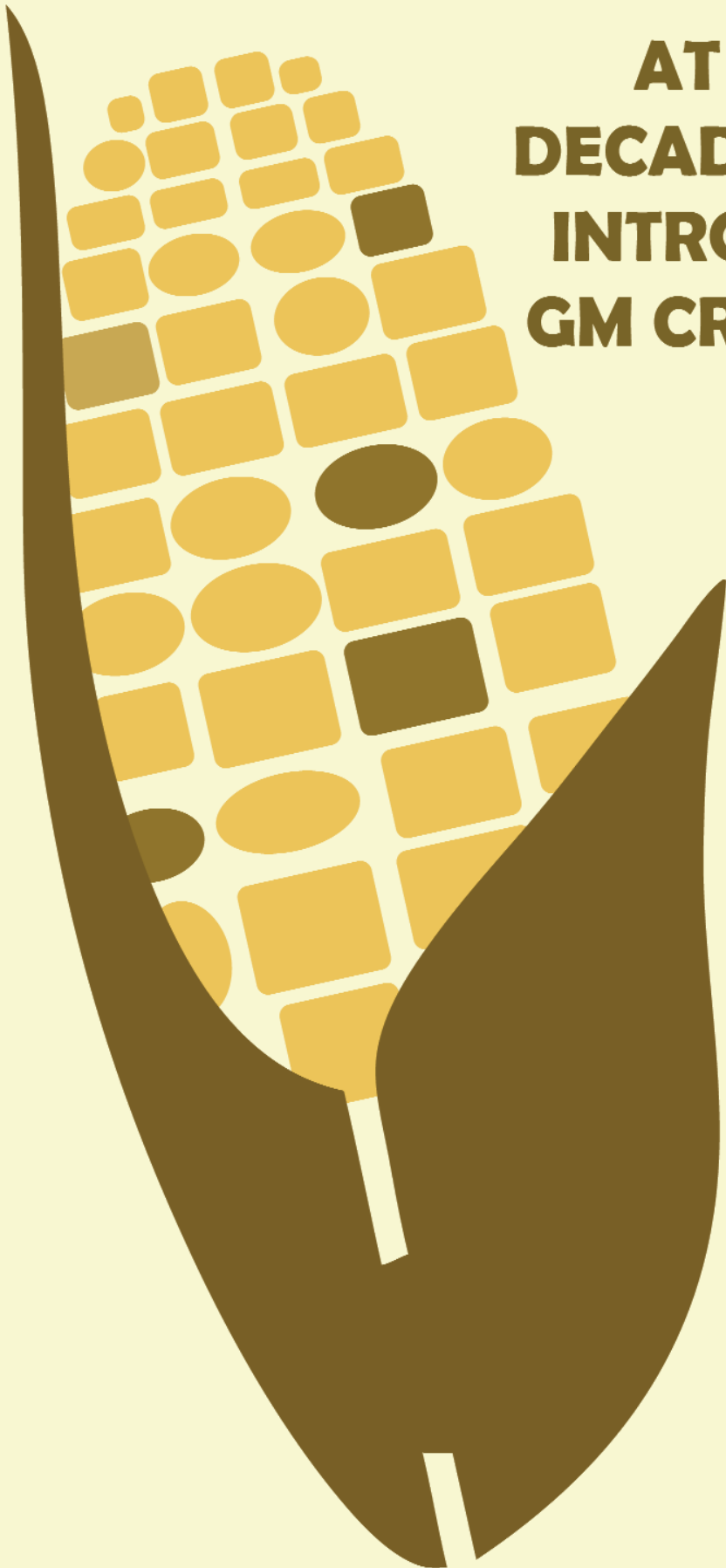


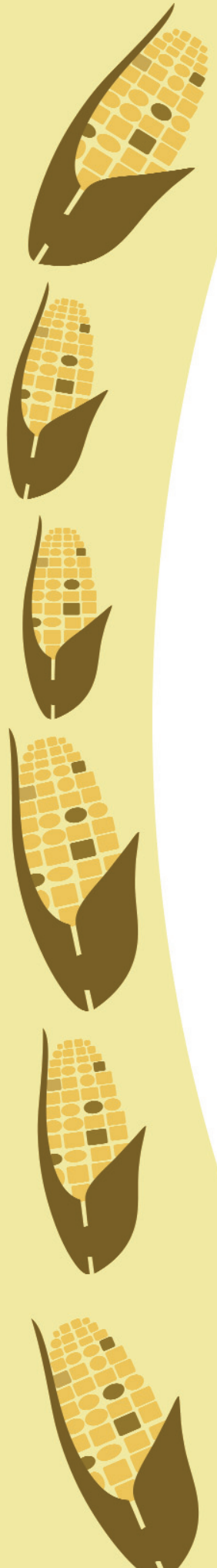
**AT ALMOST TWO
DECADES FROM THE
INTRODUCTION OF
GM CROPS IN LATIN
AMERICA**





OPEN LETTER FROM LATIN AMERICA TO:

- Ms. Navanethem Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Procedures of the United Nations,
- Mr. Marc Pallemmaerts on Implications for Environmentally Sound Management and Disposal of Hazardous Substances and Waste,
- Mr. Anand GROVER Special Rapporteur on the Right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health,
- Mr. John KNOX, Independent Expert on Human Rights Obligations relating to the enjoyment of the Environment,
- Mr. Olivier de Schutter, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food,
- Ms. Farida Shaheed, Special Rapporteur in the field of Cultural Rights,
- Mr José Graziano da Silva, Director-General of FAO
FAO's Commission on Plant Genetic Resources
- Mr. Bráulio Ferreira de Souza Dias - Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity




After 17 years of the release of Genetically Modified (GM) crops into the environment, we the members of 30 organizations from 12 countries in Latin America, convened by the Network for a GM free Latin America (RALLT) in Bogotá - Colombia from May 23rd to May 27th 2013, have analyzed the situation of our continent, and issued our concerns about the serious impacts that GM crops have in our region.

Far from fulfilling the promises that the companies once made to enter the region, GM crops have planted desolation and death in Latin America. These crops have expanded vastly and now the region is ranking second in the world in area planted with GM crops.

The companies that produce seeds and pesticides and trade GM food together with local elites and in complicity with the government in office have turned Latin America into a maquila of GM crops, and now they pretend to impose the massive trade liberalization of transgenic corn in its center of origin and diversification. The impacts of their activities have been: genetic contamination of agricultural biodiversity, destruction of natural ecosystems, subjecting the population to health problems due to the extensive use of pesticides, close to genocide. Thus, in the Southern Cone, glyphosate resistant soybeans cover an area of 475,700 Km². This whole area is sprayed with a cocktail of pesticides including glyphosate, affecting millions of people living not only in the main spraying area but also in its buffer zone.

The impacts that the agrobiotech model have produced are so enormous, that they can't be solved by techniques such as risk assessment and risk management because they have violated the human rights of entire populations. Therefore, this discussion should not be deal only in international forums such as




the Cartagena Protocol, because it just analyzes the impacts of genetic modification on biodiversity. Instead this issue should be evaluated by the Human Rights agencies of the United Nations as a problem of systematic and legalized violation of rights.

With this background information, we would like make the following requests:

Ms. Navanethem PILLAY, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Rapporteurs **Marc PALLEMAERTS**, Special Rapporteurs **Anand GROVER** and Independent Expert **John KNOX**: to request the governments of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Bolivia to initiate a comprehensive assessment of the impacts of transgenic soybean crops on health and quality of life throughout the Southern Cone with the victims participation. Also to request that until this evaluation has been completed- expansion of the agricultural frontier of GM crops should be stopped and the construction of any new infrastructure related to this kind of agribusiness should be suspend, such as the Monsanto seed plant in Las Malvinas - Córdoba, Argentina, due to the serious impacts of this agrobiotech model based on GM seeds and herbicide spraying.

The results of this evaluation should be used to implement a holistic reparation of the affected population, which should includes the reparation of their physical and mental health, the rebuild of their social net and socio-economical welfare; as well as a comprehensive restoration and remediation of the contaminated ecosystems. This process should be developed with the full participation and satisfaction of the victims; and the State should guarantee that these violations would not be repeated.

To Special Rapporteur **Mr. Olivier De SCHUTTER** we would like to express our concern in relation with the vast

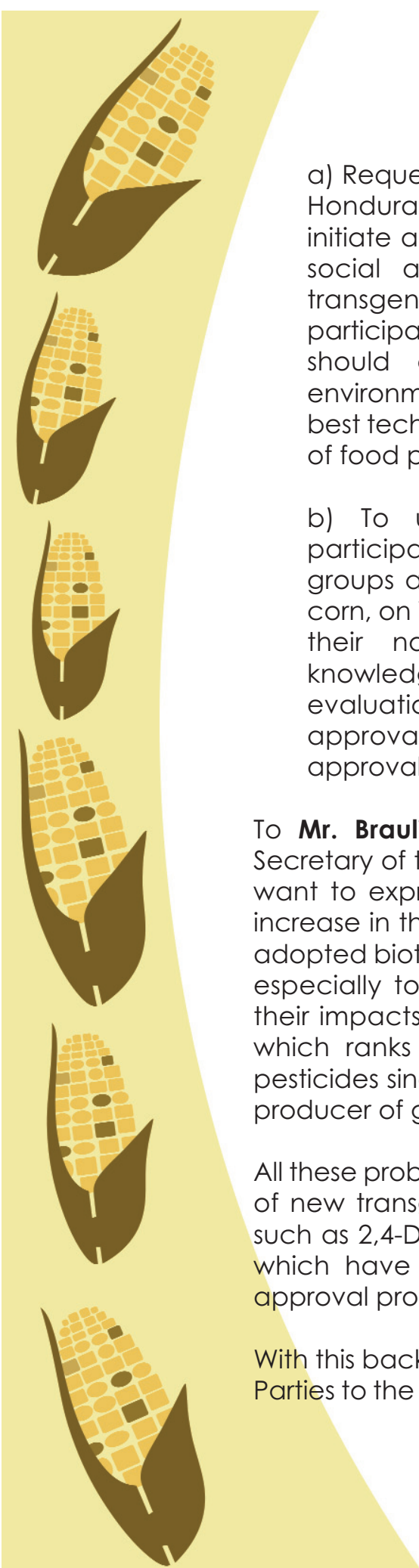


transformation of areas in Latin America once devoted to meet food security of the population, now have been converted into territory of the agribusiness.

Currently, these territories are dedicated to producing GM soybean and corn for feed promoting intensive and confined animal husbandry. In addition, most of these animals are raised in other continents, which in turn denies the native population access to healthy and culturally appropriate food. In countries where GM soy and corn are grown, animals are raised in very poor sanitary conditions and with violence, affecting the quality of the meat and creating huge impacts on feeding styles and humans and animals health. GMOs are a transnational business for transnational companies, not for consumers or local farmers. GMOs are used for feed not for food, and have even displaced extensive animal breeding in countries where it was common, worsening health, the environment and the economies of small farmers.

We would request from Mr. De Schutter to emphasize the recommendation made to the Mexican government to restore the moratorium on transgenic corn, because this recommendation has not been addressed and the impending large-scale commercial release of GM corn will mean an even greater threat to biodiversity and the right to food.

We address also to Special Rapporteur **Ms. Farida SHAHEED** to express our concern of the expansion of GM maize in the region, given the cultural importance of this crop in the whole continent and the inextricable link between the survival of native maize races and cultural and agronomic patterns, the agro-festive calendar and nutrition of rural populations in Latin America. For these reasons we express our support to the petition of several member organizations of RALLT to Ms Shaheed who called for:



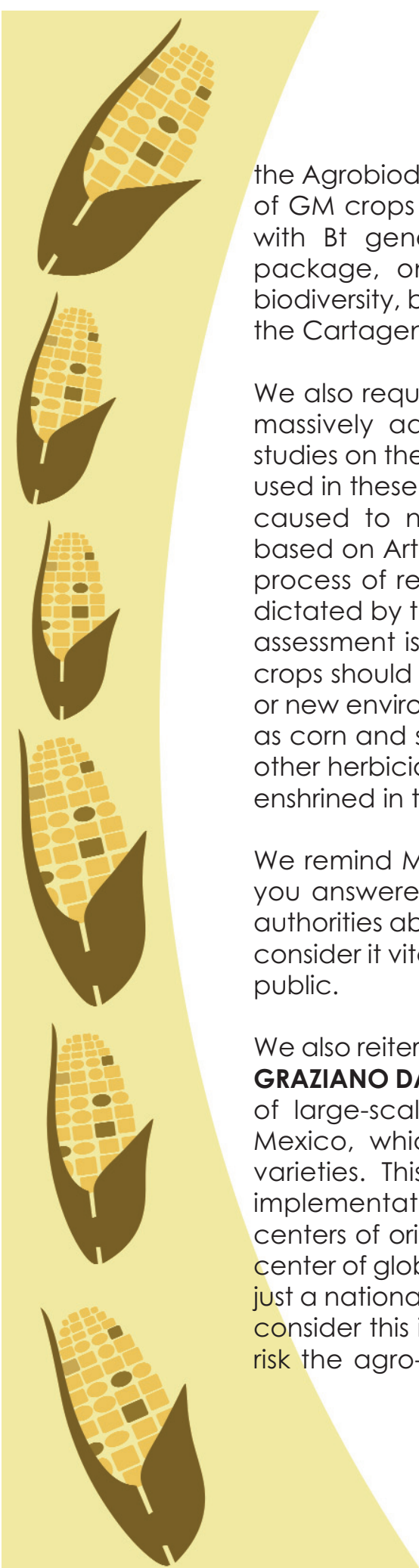
a) Request the governments of Mexico, Colombia, Honduras, Costa Rica, Chile and Paraguay to initiate an immediate cultural, environmental and social assessment to identify the impacts of transgenic maize through a transparent, participatory and consultative process. This process should also lead to a set of social and environmentally acceptable criteria to choose the best technological options to address the problems of food production in these countries.

b) To urge those countries to conduct a participatory evaluation, particularly with the groups affected by the potential impacts of GM corn, on impacts of the introduction of GM corn on their native varieties and their associated knowledge. And that until the results of this evaluation are ready, urge them to suspend the approval of new GM events, and withdraw the approval for planting GM maize in these countries.

To **Mr. Bráulio FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS**, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, we want to express our concern about the exponential increase in the use of pesticides in countries that have adopted biotech crops, since its application is directed especially toward herbicide resistant crops (HT) and their impacts on biodiversity. This is the case of Brazil, which ranks first, worldwide in the consumption of pesticides since 2010, and at the same time is a mayor producer of glyphosate-resistant soybeans.

All these problems will be exacerbated by the adoption of new transgenic resistant to more toxic herbicides, such as 2,4-D and Dicamba, glufosinato - ammonium, which have already been approved or are in the approval process in several of our countries.

With this background, we ask you to urge the Countries Parties to the Convention to include in the discussions of




the Agrobiodiversity Thematic Programme, the impacts of GM crops resistant to herbicides (alone or stacked with Bt genes), and the associated technological package, on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, because this issue is beyond the scope of the Cartagena Protocol.

We also request you to urge those countries that have massively adopted these technologies, to conduct studies on the impacts that the technological package used in these crops (transgenic seed + herbicide) have caused to national and transboundary biodiversity, based on Article 4. b of the Convention; and to start a process of restoration of the affected ecosystems, as dictated by the Article 14.2 of the Convention. Until this assessment is complete, the expansion of the biotech crops should be stopped, as well as any new approval or new environmental release of transgenic crops, such as corn and soybeans resistant to Dicamba, 2,4-D and other herbicides, based on the precautionary principle enshrined in the Preamble of the Convention.

We remind Mr. Días that in a previous communication you answered our request agreeing to alert national authorities about the risks of these technologies and we consider it vital to make their responses available to the public.

We also reiterate -you and to **Mr. Director, FAO, Mr. José GRAZIANO DA SILVA**- our grave concern over the threat of large-scale commercial release of GM maize in Mexico, which will irreversibly contaminate farmers' varieties. This threat also highlights the inadequate implementation of the precautionary principle in the centers of origin and diversification of crops. Being the center of global origin of crops, it cannot be considered just a national issue; therefore it is of UN competence to consider this issue and urge governments not to put at risk the agro-biodiversity and the rights of indigenous



peoples and peasants, that have created corn varieties -a heritage of the peoples in the service of humanity.

We want to present our concerns to the director of FAO, **Mr José GRAZIANO DA SILVA** and the Committee on Plant Genetic Resources of FAO, in relation to the adoption in several countries of Latin America of new seed laws, that include the penalization of the movement of native seeds, which is the basis of the peasants and family agriculture. This is a clear violation of the rights of the farmers, recognized in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. These laws also reinforce market control of seeds by biotech companies, and the adoption of GM seeds in our fields, endangering plant genetic resources in the region.

We therefore call on the Commission to urge the countries of the region to take these considerations into account when creating new laws.

These are all historical records of an environmental tragedy, and above all, a human tragedy.

**For a GM free Latin America,
agricultural and cultural diversity
and the revitalization of family and
peasant farming.**