

## Geoengineering Moratorium at UN Ministerial in Japan Risky Climate Techno-fixes Blocked

NAGOYA, Japan – In a landmark consensus decision, the 193-member UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will close [its tenth biennial meeting](#) with a *de facto* moratorium on geoengineering projects and experiments. “Any private or public experimentation or adventurism intended to manipulate the planetary thermostat will be in violation of this carefully crafted UN consensus,” stated Silvia Ribeiro, Latin American Director of ETC Group.

The [agreement](#), reached during the ministerial portion of the two-week meeting which included 110 environment ministers, asks governments to ensure that no geoengineering activities take place until risks to the environment and biodiversity and associated social, cultural and economic impacts have been appropriately considered. The CBD secretariat was also instructed to report back on various geoengineering proposals and potential intergovernmental regulatory measures.

The unusually strong consensus decision builds on the [2008 moratorium on ocean fertilization](#). That agreement, negotiated at COP 9 in Bonn, put the brakes on a litany of failed “experiments” – both public and private – to sequester atmospheric carbon dioxide in the oceans’ depths by spreading nutrients on the sea surface. Since then, attention has turned to a range of futuristic proposals to block a percentage of solar radiation via large-scale interventions in the atmosphere, stratosphere and outer space that would alter global temperatures and precipitation patterns.

“This decision clearly places the governance of geoengineering in the United Nations where it belongs,” said ETC Group Executive Director Pat Mooney. “This decision is a victory for common sense, and for precaution. It will not inhibit legitimate scientific research. Decisions on geoengineering cannot be made by small groups of scientists from a small group of countries that establish self-serving ‘[voluntary guidelines](#)’ on climate hacking. What little credibility such efforts may have had in some policy circles in the global North has been shattered by this decision. The UK Royal Society and its partners should cancel their [Solar Radiation Management Governance Initiative](#) and respect that the world’s governments have collectively decided that future deliberations on geoengineering should take place in the UN, where all countries have a seat at the table and where civil society can watch and influence what they are doing.”

Delegates in Nagoya have now clearly understood the potential threat that deployment – or even field testing – of geoengineering technologies poses to the protection of

biodiversity. The decision was hammered out in long and difficult late night sessions of a “friends of the chair” group, attended by ETC Group, and adopted by the Working Group 1 Plenary on 27 October 2010. The Chair of the climate and biodiversity negotiations called the final text “a highly delicate compromise.” All that remains to do now is gavel it through in the final plenary at 6 PM Friday (Nagoya time).

“The decision is not perfect,” said Neth Dano of ETC Group Philippines. “Some delegations are understandably concerned that the interim definition of geoengineering is too narrow because it does not include Carbon Capture and Storage technologies. Before the next CBD meeting, there will be ample opportunity to consider these questions in more detail. But climate techno-fixes are now firmly on the UN agenda and will lead to important debates as the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Earth Summit approaches. A change of course is essential, and geoengineering is clearly not the way forward.”

In Nagoya, Japan

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#### **Note to Editors:**

The full texts of the relevant decisions on geoengineering are copied below:

#### **Under Climate Change and Biodiversity ([UNEP/CBD/COP/10/L.36](#))**

*8. Invites Parties and other Governments, according to national circumstance and priorities, as well as relevant organizations and processes, to consider the guidance below on ways to conserve, sustainably use and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services while contributing to climate-change mitigation and adaptation:*

....

*(w) Ensure, in line and consistent with decision IX/16 C, on ocean fertilization and biodiversity and climate change, in the absence of science based, global, transparent and effective control and regulatory mechanisms for geo-engineering, and in accordance with the precautionary approach and Article 14 of the Convention, that no climate-related geo-engineering activities[1] that may affect biodiversity take place, until there is an adequate scientific basis on which to justify such activities and appropriate consideration of the associated risks for the environment and biodiversity and associated social, economic and cultural impacts, with the exception of small scale scientific research studies that would be conducted in a controlled setting in accordance with Article 3 of*

*the Convention, and only if they are justified by the need to gather specific scientific data and are subject to a thorough prior assessment of the potential impacts on the environment;*

*[1] Without prejudice to future deliberations on the definition of geo-engineering activities, understanding that any technologies that deliberately reduce solar insolation or increase carbon sequestration from the atmosphere on a large scale that may affect biodiversity (excluding carbon capture and storage from fossil fuels when it captures carbon dioxide before it is released into the atmosphere) should be considered as forms of geo-engineering which are relevant to the Convention on Biological Diversity until a more precise definition can be developed. Noting that solar insolation is defined as a measure of solar radiation energy received on a given surface area in a given hour and that carbon sequestration is defined as the process of increasing the carbon content of a reservoir/pool other than the atmosphere.*

AND

9 9. Requests the Executive Secretary to:

....

*(o) Compile and synthesize available scientific information, and views and experiences of indigenous and local communities and other stakeholders, on the possible impacts of geo-engineering techniques on biodiversity and associated social, economic and cultural considerations, and options on definitions and understandings of climate-related geo-engineering relevant to the Convention on Biological Diversity and make it available for consideration at a meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice prior to the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties;*

*(p) Taking into account the possible need for science based global, transparent and effective control and regulatory mechanisms, subject to the availability of financial resources, undertake a study on gaps in such existing mechanisms for climate-related geo-engineering relevant to the Convention on Biological Diversity, bearing in mind that such mechanisms may not be best placed under the Convention on Biological Diversity, for consideration by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific Technical and Technological Advice prior to a future meeting of the Conference of the Parties and to communicate the results to relevant organizations;*

**Under New and Emerging Issues UNEP/CBD/COP/10/L.2 :**

4. *Invites Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to submit information on synthetic biology and geo-engineering, for the consideration by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, in accordance with the procedures of decision IX/29, while applying the precautionary approach to the field release of synthetic life, cell or genome into the environment;*

## **Under Marine and Coastal Biodiversity [UNEP/CBD/COP/10/L.42](#)**

*13 Reaffirming that the programme of work still corresponds to the global priorities, has been further strengthened through decisions VIII/21, VIII/22, VIII/24, and IX/20, but is not fully implemented, and therefore encourages Parties to continue to implement these programme elements, and endorses the following guidance, where applicable and in accordance with national capacity and circumstances, for enhanced implementation:*

*(e) Ensuring that no ocean fertilization takes place unless in accordance with decision IX/16 C and taking note of the report (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/14/INF/7) and development noted para 57 – 62;*

### ***Impacts of ocean fertilization on marine and coastal biodiversity***

*57. Welcomes the report on compilation and synthesis of available scientific information on potential impacts of direct human-induced ocean fertilization on marine biodiversity (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/14/INF/7), which was prepared in collaboration with United Nations Environment Programme-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) and the International Maritime Organization in pursuance of paragraph 3 of decision IX/20;*

*58. Recalling the important decision IX/16 C on ocean fertilization, reaffirming the precautionary approach, recognizes that given the scientific uncertainty that exists, significant concern surrounds the potential intended and unintended impacts of large-scale ocean fertilization on marine ecosystem structure and function, including the sensitivity of species and habitats and the physiological changes induced by micro-nutrient and macro-nutrient additions to surface waters as well as the possibility of persistent alteration of an ecosystem, and requests Parties to implement decision IX/16 C;*

*59. Notes that the governing bodies under the London Convention and Protocol adopted in 2008 resolution LC-LP.1 (2008) on the regulation of ocean fertilization, in which Contracting Parties declared, inter alia, that given the present state of knowledge, ocean fertilization activities other than legitimate scientific research should not be allowed;*

*60. Recognizes the work under way within the context of the London Convention and London Protocol to contribute to the development of a regulatory mechanism referred to in decision IX/16 C, and invites Parties and other Governments to act in accordance with the Resolution LC-LP.2(2010) of the London Convention and Protocol ;*

61. *Notes that in order to provide reliable predictions on the potential adverse impacts on marine biodiversity of activities involving ocean fertilization, further work to enhance our knowledge and modelling of ocean biogeochemical processes is required, in accordance with decision IX/16 (c) and taking into account decision IX/20 and LC-LP.2 (2010);*

62. *Notes also that there is a pressing need for research to advance our understanding of marine ecosystem dynamics and the role of the ocean in the global carbon cycle;*

[Geopiracy: The Case Against Geoengineering](#) is a new publication by ETC Group that provides an overview of the issues involved.