



USC CANADA  
56 SPARKS STREET  
SUITE 705  
OTTAWA, ONTARIO  
K1P 5B1, Canada

TEL: (613) 234-6827  
FAX: (613) 234-6842  
E-MAIL: [info@usc-canada.org](mailto:info@usc-canada.org)  
WEB SITE: [www.usc-canada.org](http://www.usc-canada.org)  
Founder: Dr. Lotta Hitschmanova

---

**For Immediate Release**

**UN Biodiversity Conference Focuses on Food Prices and Biofuels:  
Vote in Parliament Hangs in Balance**

**Ottawa, May 28, 2008** - The turning tide of public and scientific opinion on biofuels is being ignored by many of the world's governments, Canadian NGOs argued today. They called on the Canadian government to get in step with scientific and public opposition to biofuels by rejecting Bill C-33 in the House of Commons and supporting African countries in UN talks.

Civil society representatives at the UN Convention on Biological Diversity this week, in Bonn Germany, are reporting that international negotiations on biodiversity and biofuels have been ignoring public opposition and assuming that the use of food for fuel is a good idea.

Since news of the food crisis erupted over a month ago, hundreds of Canadians have taken part in public forums, letter-writing efforts, and teach-ins suggesting that the biofuel push is using valuable food for cars, hurting both people and the planet. Wheat and rice prices have doubled from the Philippines to Egypt, forcing hungry residents to riot for their food. Developed countries that have adopted food-for-fuel policies have seen their food prices increase between four and eight per cent.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Food, Jean Ziegler, has called the biofuel craze a "crime against humanity." Here at the Convention, award-winning economist Jeffrey Sacks called biofuels "the stupidest thing ever." The International Monetary Fund has argued that biofuels are responsible for at least 30% of the dramatic price hikes that have forced people into the streets demanding their right to food. 30 million more people have been dragged into poverty.

Although initial studies had assumed that such "green" fuels were good for the environment, people, and agriculture, there is increasing consensus that biofuels are a fake climate change solution. Earlier this year, Princeton University's Timothy Searchinger found that twice the greenhouse gases are generated over the full life cycle of corn-based ethanol than are generated from fossil fuels.

Susan Walsh, Executive Director of one of Canada's oldest NGOs, USC Canada, writes from the convention: "Delegates at this negotiation seem to be stuck in a time warp, refusing to acknowledge mounting evidence that biofuels will not only threaten agricultural biodiversity, but lead to poverty and human rights abuses. They are already pushing families off their farms in developing countries."

With negotiations in Germany set to wrap up on Friday, and a vote on C-33 anticipated this week in Canada's Parliament, there is an urgent need for Canadians to call their MPs, the Ministers of the Environment and Development, and make their voices heard. Canada's disappointing showing on the world stage must be turned around by next week, when the heads of state of many governments will converge in Rome for a high-level meeting on the food crisis, global warming, and biofuels.

A recent UN Human Rights Council called on the world's governments to ensure that "nothing stand in the way of protecting the right to food." While initially opposed to this text, the Canadian government ultimately signed on. They now need to stand by that commitment and change their biofuels position in Bonn. Biofuels are a false solutions to climate change!

-30-

*For more information or to arrange an interview, contact:*

Susan Walsh, USC Canada (in Bonn, Germany via cell), 613-291-9793

Lise Latrémouille, USC Canada, 1-800-565-6872 (613-234-6827 in Ottawa) ext. 226

### **ABOUT USC CANADA**

USC Canada was founded in 1945 by Lotta Hitschmanova as the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada. USC promotes vibrant family farms, strong rural communities, and healthy ecosystems around the world. With engaged Canadians and partners in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, we support programs, training, and policies that strengthen biodiversity, food sovereignty, and the rights of those at the heart of resilient food systems -- women, indigenous peoples, and small-scale farmers. For more information visit [www.usc-canada.org](http://www.usc-canada.org).