



# Living Material Is Declared World Heritage

**In response to the proliferation of patents on plants, animals, and even human embryos throughout the course of the 20th century, the international community is putting a halt to the privatization of both living organisms and biological processes.**

By Matthew High  
USA TOMORROW

In recent years, important international debates have recognised that a primary concern for the future of humanity is to avoid the privatization of living material.

The most recent of these debates is currently under way in the Universal Forum of Cultures 2004, where a broad intellectual community representing a variety of cultures considers that living material must be declared as world heritage. The Forum has called upon scientists, economic powers and politicians to make the rejection of patents on living material a universal ethical decision.

Public opinion is currently strongly in favour of the abolishment of patents on living material. An international coalition of citizens has been struggling for years in over 100 countries, creating such debate, putting pressure on governments and supporting countries that are against the patents. One such group is the World Trade Organisation's African group. They believe that alternative methods must be sought out to compensate innovations and support research that promotes the public good.

One of the first significant victories in this battle occurred this past September, when the Directive on the Legal Pro-

tection of Biotechnological Inventions was repealed.

Concerning the democratic control of patents, the WTO meeting in Qatar (November, 2001) has received significant public pressure to make moral consideration prevail in the law on patents.

Furthermore, the majority of the countries involved, despite not being the most influential ones, are in favour of the creation of an International Court on Living Material. Following the creation of the Seed Court in 2003, such a Court would represent a second step toward achieving independent control of the patent community.

Regarding the regulation of access to biological resources, there have been significant repercussions from the report presented by the signing countries of the Convention on Biological Diversity on the subject of the impact of intellectual property rights on bio diversity and traditional knowledge. In keeping with 1992 Convention and the International Undertaking of the FAO, numerous Latin-American governments are drawing up strict national laws for the protection of innovations in local communities.

The gradual lessening of the number of patents on both living material and biological processes, is giving shape to a world where living material will be the heritage of all humanity.

News item 1 inspired by the Proposals Booklet: ***Refusing privatisation of life and proposing alternatives***, coordinated by Bob Brac de la Perrière

**Collection of Desirable News (1)** inspired by 25 Proposals Booklets of the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World, [www.alliance21.org](http://www.alliance21.org)



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