

security and sustainable development. A collaborative response to this petition was released on September 7 by six Canadian ministries (and is summarized on the Canadian Food Inspection Agency web site: [www.cfia.agr.ca](http://www.cfia.agr.ca)). The response would, at least at first glance, appear to be well balanced and describes the high standards used in controlling products developed through applications of biotechnology research. In terms of environment and health, it describes the checks and balances of the system in place and the new legislation in preparation.

Canada has adopted the achievement of sustainable development as a central purpose of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, Canada's principal environment protection statute. The Canadian government has confirmed in its Guide to Green Government ('Guide') that there are three dimensions to sustainable development that must be integrated: social, economic, and environmental. The Guide points out that such an integrated approach must be based on sound science, including recognition of the precautionary principle -- regulation cannot simply be reactive, responding to problems after they develop.

The global regulation of GMOs raises issues concerning all three dimensions of the sustainable development concept. The government's response of September 7 seeks to reassure the public and gives the impression that everything is under control and that everything is being done in the public interest.

Nevertheless, we must question these reassurances. Can we be sure that all governments in the world, in the context of the down-sizing of public bureaucracies, have enough personnel to prepare such an integrated approach? In Canada, will we see legislation on this issue actually passed or will it die like the bill on reproduction which died before several legislatures and is still on the order paper? Can we expect all countries of the world to be able to carry the burden of verification which is technically complex and sometimes impossible to carry out in the absence of adequate resources? Given the pace of change and technical complexity of developments in this area, how can we be sure that there is public awareness of, and input on, developments in GMO research and production?

Clearly NGOs have a vital role to play in raising public awareness and scrutiny in this area. The other lesson to be learned here is the urgent need to develop and reinforce the regulatory capacities of governments in these highly-complex areas.

A culture of peace needs to engage everyone in contributing to a sustainable future for seven generations.

### **Exclusion can breed violence**

(2) As part of building a culture of peace, we must respect cultural diversities and help them to flourish, while respecting the rights of everyone to live in harmony with nature. Exclusion in all its forms has a potential for violence. In a world of increasing diversity, we must be aware of the dangers of exclusion and marginalization, which diminish our capacity to live together in peace.