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Backgrounder Series, Number 3
December 2000

Biological Weapons in the Drug War A Review of Opposition in South America

With Examples from Other Regions, Intergovernmental Agencies, and NGOs

INTRODUCTION

Under heavy US pressure, Colombia is choosing to ignore its neighbors and the international community and support the US strategy to use biological weapons in the Drug War. Although the plan is opposed by government officials and civil society both domestically and internationally, the Colombian Environment Ministry has prepared a US \$7 million project proposal for work on illicit crops including a major component to develop biological weapons to forcibly eradicate coca crops.¹

While Colombia denies that it will use US-developed biological weapons, the US State Department's anti-narcotics chief Rand Beers says the US will keep the pressure up, recently telling the BBC *"I am never prepared to admit it is over."*² The inventor of the US government's preferred agent, a strain of the *Fusarium oxysporum* fungus called EN-4, is using the private company Ag/Bio Con (co-owned with a former US Air Force general) to promote use of the fungus. **The inventor, whose work has been funded by the US government for over a decade, told journalists on camera that he believes biological weapons should be used by force on target countries.**

The agents are to be used against the Colombian government's enemies in an escalating armed conflict that has displaced one and a half million civilians and taken tens of thousands of lives. Colombia is the third largest recipient of US military aid in the world (after Egypt and Israel). Biological weapons have been proposed as part of a military offensive aimed at regaining state control of coca growing areas, most of which are *de facto* administered by guerrillas or right wing paramilitaries.

Colombia's proposal mimics US usage of the deliberately confusing misnomer "biological control" when referring to coca-killing agents and spray technology. In fact, they are not legitimate biological controls; but weapons designed to provoke massive disease outbreaks and remain in the soil for decades. The term is being abused by when applied to this biological weapons research.

¹ The announcement of the search for biological agents in native flora and fauna was made officially in an Environment Ministry press release on July 11, 2000. Drafts of the project leaked to civil society organizations beginning in May 2000. Minister Mayr introduced the project in a hearing of the Colombian Senate on August 1, 2000 and explained to Colombian weekly *Revista Cambio* (July 24, 2000): *"The other research front seeks to identify, also in native biodiversity, species that can be used as biological controls for illicit crops without putting the environment and human health at risk. It is the case, for example, that some insects, fungi, and microorganisms from our ecosystems could act as natural predators of coca plants in a more beneficial and effective way than fumigation with chemical substances."* See <http://www.revistacambio.com>

² BBC Panorama, 2 Oct 2000, [Britain's Secret War on Drugs](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/audiovideo/programmes/panorama/newsid_948000/948102.stm), http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/audiovideo/programmes/panorama/newsid_948000/948102.stm

In other parts of the world, a program in Uzbekistan supported by the US, UK, and United Nations Drug Control Program (UNDCP) is developing weapons to eradicate opium poppy. These agents are to be used in conflict-torn parts of Asia, including Afghanistan and Burma. In Africa, concern has been expressed that anti-crop biological agents may be proposed for use on cannabis fields.

There is no exemption in the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), a key international arms control treaty, for the use of biological weapons in military, law enforcement, or civilian actions to forcibly eradicate illicit crops. Countries North and South recognize that prohibiting any use of biological weapons is critically important to stop arms proliferation, uphold treaty commitments, and protect human health and the environment.

The Agent Green³ biological weapons controversy has generated important attention and statements from governments, intergovernmental organizations, and NGOs. This is especially true in South America, where the debate has been most intense. This paper organizes and presents important examples of government and other positions on Agent Green, providing an important reference point for policymakers and civil society working on policies to halt the use of biological weapons everywhere.

THE BIOLOGICAL WARFARE PROPOSAL

Despite the widespread opposition detailed in this paper, the Colombian Environment Ministry's proposal to develop biological weapons for the eradication of coca is proceeding. The only donor country that has expressed interest is the US, making the Americans the logical funder for the proposal despite their prior statements, including to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, that it would not bilaterally fund this biological weapons research. Earlier this year, Colombia refused to sign a controversial US funded contract with the United Nations Drug Control Program (UNDCP) for the testing of a US-developed *Fusarium oxysporum* strain named EN-4.

Colombian President Andres Pastrana and Environment Minister Juan Mayr are attempting a dangerous and shortsighted political balance between global and US interests. A very small number of senior Colombian officials have deceptively said that Colombia will not allow the testing of "the fungus" ("*el hongo*"), claiming that the US EN-4 poses risks to the environment and human health because it is "*alien*". The effort is a public relations attempt to deflect scrutiny of their decision to proceed with the development of a domestic "*hongo criollo*" ("*Creole fungus*") biological weapon to accomplish the same ends, and potentially cause similar environmental havoc, as the purportedly discarded EN-4 strain.

Thus, Colombia has only renounced a single US government-developed strain of *Fusarium oxysporum*. Ignoring the pleas of its neighbors and civil society, and with strong support from US anti-narcotics and security agencies, Colombia is moving ahead with "native" biological weapons developed from a wide variety of local pathogenic organisms.

The following sections of this paper present an important (but not exhaustive) list of examples of the lack of endorsement and broad rejection of the US-Colombian plan by Colombia's neighbors, other Southern and Northern countries, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society... but first:

INVENTOR OF THE USA'S AGENT: USE THE WEAPON BY FORCE

The anti-coca biological agent preferred by the United States is *Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *Erythroxyli* strain EN-4, a particularly virulent coca-killing type of a fungus genus that attacks many crops.⁴ The strain was investigated along with many other *Fusarium* types (including samples from Colombia) in research contracts between the US government and Dr. David Sands, a plant pathologist at Montana State University in the USA. After the successful identification of EN-4 and development of formulation and dispersal technology, Dr. Sands established a private company called Ag/Bio Con to promote EN-4 and other agents to eradicate illicit crops. Ag/Bio Con has briefed the Colombian government, including

³ "Agent Green" is the Sunshine Project's name for the biological weapons being developed to eradicate illicit crops. The name is a reference to Agent Orange and other toxic chemical defoliants used massively by the United States during the Vietnam War. "Green" is a reference to the misguided and confusing attempts by the United States and other proponents of biological warfare against drug crops to characterize their biological agents as environmentally-friendly or as a "green" form of warfare.

⁴ Please see the Sunshine Project's report of May 2000 prepared for government delegations to the Convention on Biological Diversity for more detailed information. The report may be downloaded at: <http://www.sunshine-project.org>.

President Pastrana, and sought contracts with the US Government for coca eradication research. Dr. Sands was interviewed in September 2000 by the BBC investigative journalism program Panorama and explained, in the frightening excerpts below, that he believes biological weapons should be used by force, with or without the consent of target countries:⁵

- SANDS:** This fungus is the closest thing I've ever seen to a silver bullet ... I have seen it take out 99% of plants in a field. I think that's incredible and I think people should know that this technology exists... This would be a green kind of warfare...
- BBC:** Okay, but we're talking semantics here. You call it green warfare. Other people call it biological warfare. That is semantically correct, it is biological warfare.
- SANDS:** That can be right. It's biological warfare or green warfare. I just want you to understand my opinion is it's a good thing if it's done to eradicate something that the entire world feels is noxious.
- BBC:** What happens if consent is not forthcoming... I put to you a hypothetical - you never get consent - what should happen then?
- SANDS:** You're saying that two countries [Colombia and Afghanistan] that knowingly are unleashing a chemical, a drug, on our children, an addictive drug, that they are consenting to do that and they are not consenting to do biological control, I think they should suffer the consequences of that decision.
- BBC:** Which means that we should go in without consent.
- SANDS:** I think somebody should.
- BBC:** And it should be treated as an act of counter terrorism?
- SANDS:** Well it's a pretty high stakes game. Just go to any rehab clinic and check it out yourself.
- BBC:** You're saying yes?
- SANDS:** Yes.

COUNTRY BY COUNTRY INFORMATION - SOUTH AMERICA

Argentina

A bill being considered in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies' Environment and Foreign Relations Commissions⁶ requests Mercosur (the Southern Cone regional integration organization), to issue a declaration against the use of biological agents to eradicate coca. The bill also requests Mercosur to work with the Andean Community (see below) on the issue. It is sponsored by Deputy Rafael Roma, Secretary of the Foreign Relations Commission and is particularly concerned with, *"the lethal 'agent green' in the fumigation and eradication of coca and opium poppy, within the framework of Plan Colombia."*⁷

Bolivia

Bolivia had banned aerial chemical eradication of illicit coca through Law 1008 of 1998. On the use of biological agents, the Bolivian Environment Minister has stated that he opposes the use of *Fusarium oxysporum* for eradication of coca crops because of the risks that it may pose on the environment and human and animal health. In a cable sent to Andean governments, the Minister stressed the importance of taking actions against the threats that use of mycoherbicides might pose to Amazonian ecosystems.

Bolivia, a member of the Andean Community, also signed the CAAM declaration (see below).

⁵ BBC Panorama, 2 Oct 2000, Britain's Secret War on Drugs, http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/audiovideo/programmes/panorama/newsid_948000/948102.stm

⁶ Declaration 6513, T.P.Nº 150.

⁷ See http://www1.hcdn.gov.ar/dependencias/crnaturales/dip_declaracion.html

Brazil

The possible use of biological weapons in Colombia has been opposed at the highest levels of the Brazilian government. Brazil's concern has been raised primarily in the context of its questions about President Pastrana's Plan Colombia, which takes a military approach to solving the Colombian conflict. Brazil is concerned about US military involvement in the Amazon (through support of the plan) and spillover of the conflict and its effects onto Brazil's territory.

Senior Brazilian senior officials are fearful that *Fusarium oxysporum* may affect the Brazilian Amazon. In an article for *O Estado de São Paulo*, Brazil's National Security Council chief Gen. Alberto Cardoso spoke out against the dangers of the fungus.⁸ Brazil's Minister of Defense, Giraldo Quintão declared that one of his country's major concerns regarding Plan Colombia is the use of biological weapons.⁹

In addition to conveying its concerns directly to the Colombian government, according to Brazilian press accounts, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has expressed its opposition directly to the office of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.¹⁰

Other Brazilian leaders who have opposed the use of biological weapons in Colombia include former National Drug Policy Secretary ("Drug Czar") Walter Maierovitch and Environment Minister Jose Sarney. Maierovitch told the Brazilian press "A great concern for us is the biological warfare in the Amazon. Brazil has to anticipate that if they use fungi, such as *Fusarium oxysporum*, those can also reach other crops, not illicit, that are key for survival of farmers in the region. In addition, who guarantees that these biological weapons cannot come to reach the Brazilian Amazon?"¹¹ According to Sarney, a "grave aspect [of Plan Colombia] is the threat of biological warfare with a fungus with a strange and ugly name - *Fusarium oxysporum* - to kill coca plants. No one can predict the effects of this weapon over the fauna, flora, and waters..."¹²

Ecuador

Situated just south of Colombia's conflict-torn Putumayo and Nariño Departments, Ecuador has been a leader in opposing the use of biological agents in eradication, promoting regional efforts to stop Agent Green. Refugees from military conflict in Colombia's coca growing regions are streaming into Ecuador and the country is fearful of additional cross-border impacts of the escalating civil war in Colombia.

Following press reports indicating US interest in testing *Fusarium* in Ecuador, on July 18th 2000, Ecuador's Minister of Environment Rodolfo Rendón issued a public statement establishing his Ministry's opposition to the use of *Fusarium oxysporum* or any biological agent. Ecuador's Agriculture Ministry reacted to the news by enacting a law, *Acuerdo Ministerial 162* of July 20th, 2000. The law reads in part: "knowing the danger of strains of the fungus *Fusarium oxysporum* that can cause serious injury to the environment, human beings, animals, and plants... Prohibits the entry and use of the pathogen *Fusarium oxysporum* in the entire national territory..."

Rendón has taken the lead in securing regional solidarity against the use of biological agents, encouraging action by the Andean Community and Amazonian Cooperation Treaty (discussed below). His ministry's statement of July 18th reads in part "*Fusarium oxysporum f.sp. erythroxyli* ... could have negative impacts on human health and the environment. Minister Rendón also highlighted the international law provision according to which States that the sovereign right to exploit the natural resources within their territories and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. This decision has been taken and there is no room for change."¹³

Ecuador, a member of the Andean Community, also signed the CAAM declaration (see below).

⁸ <http://www.mre.gov.br/acs/interclip/pb/pbbv1ea171001.htm>

⁹ <http://www.mre.gov.br/acs/interclip/pb/pben1em290801.htm>

¹⁰ <http://www.mre.gov.br/cimeira/fp3108-a.htm>

¹¹ Quoted in Costa, Florencia. "O Perigo Mora ao Lado" In *Isotoe*, August 9, 2000. <http://www.terra.com.br/istoe/1610/brasil/1610perigo.htm>

¹² Folha do São Paulo, September 1st, 2000. In: <http://www.mre.gov.br/cimeira/fp0109-d.htm>

¹³ Convention on Biological Diversity. "Article 3. States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.", see also <http://www.sunshine-project.org/pr180800.html>

Peru

Peru has a clear policy and unambiguous law prohibiting the use of biological weapons against coca. Peru was the first country in the region to ban the use of such agents in *Decreto Supremo* 0004-2000-AG of March 23, 2000. The decree prohibits the use of biological agents to eradicate coca crops and entitles the law enforcement to confiscate such agents when used in eradication of coca. The grounds for this provision are protection of the environment and human health.

Peru, a member of the Andean Community, also signed the CAAM declaration.

Venezuela

The Venezuelan Attorney General has warned of the possible entrance of *Fusarium oxysporum* into Venezuelan territory as a result of applications in Colombia. Citing the Venezuelan Constitution's ban on biological weapons, the Attorney General's Office opposes the use of *Fusarium oxysporum* in Colombia as a biological weapon and because of potential damage to the environment and human health.¹⁴

In a letter to peers across the Amazon region on 31 August, the Venezuelan Minister of Environment stated that his office "*shares concerns regarding the eventual impacts on the Amazonian ecosystems that result from the use of [Fusarium oxysporum].*" Venezuela has directly transmitted its concerns to the Colombian government including the Colombian Ministry of Environment.

Venezuela, a member of the Andean Community, also signed the CAAM declaration.

South American Regional Summits

The use of biological weapons has been on the agenda of recent regional summits. It was considered at by South American presidents in Brasilia on August 31, 2000 and the Summit of Defense Ministers in the Americas, in Manaus in October 2000. At the South American president's meeting, Colombia's Pastrana tried to defuse Brazil and other countries' opposition by saying his government would not use the US-developed *Fusarium* EN-4. This affirmation made to South American presidents and in other places, has not persuaded Brazil or any other of Colombia's neighbors to drop their opposition.¹⁵

OUTSIDE THE REGION - EXAMPLES

Germany

On July 5, 2000, the German Parliament approved Resolution No. 14/3766 stating: "*The German Parliament is... against the use of new biological methods of eradication, because it can not be excluded that this will have negative effects on the fragile Amazonian rainforest ecosystem and that it will counteract the decisions by the UN Conference of Rio de Janeiro of 1992.*"¹⁶

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ludger Volmer told Parliament the government opposes biological eradication, arguing: "*The strategy of drug eradication in Colombia is based on massive spraying action with herbicides and possibly also biological agents from the air. The German Government views these methods as both harmful and useless.*"¹⁷

Kenya

Kenya has spoken against the development and use of biological agents for crop eradication. Kenya feels such agents set dangerous precedents in agriculture, biodiversity and for indigenous peoples' and local communities' rights. Kenya voiced its concern during the Fifth Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in May 22, 2000:

¹⁴ El Universal, 29 October 2000, see: <http://noticias.eluniversal.com/2000/10/29/29114DD.shtml>

¹⁵ La Nación, September 14, 2000. <http://www.mre.gov.br/acs/interclip/jornais/setembro/nacion14a.html>

¹⁶ See: <http://dip.bundestag.de/btp/14/14113.pdf>, page 10732.

¹⁷ See: <http://dip.bundestag.de/btp/14/14113.pdf>, page 10731

Kenya feels that CBD should take a stand against the development of biological agents that kill cultivated species... if the CBD does not take a stand, it would have set a very dangerous precedent, because today you could use an alien and invasive species to control cannabis, coca and so on, maybe tomorrow it might be coffee, maize or even sugar cane. We feel that the world's small farmers, indigenous peoples and local communities domesticated these plants, identifying them, working with them and nurturing them for particular purposes. We feel that these communities have done a service to the world and one that we cannot eradicate.

*Biological agents, if used to eradicate crops [are] infectious and aggressive [and] pose a great danger as alien and invasive species. They may, for example, spread to regions and countries that do not agree to their use. They might have unintended consequences such as disrupting wild relatives, they might affect the soil beneficial fauna -and we so poorly understand what goes on below ground, especially in developing countries."*¹⁸

A story quoting Kenyan NGOs including Green Belt Movement founder Wangari Mathai was published in Nairobi's Daily Nation on July 20th, 2000. Later reprinted internationally by the Environmental News Service, the story highlighted the threat to ecosystems in the Mt. Kenya region if biological agents under development in the US were used to eradicate cannabis.¹⁹

Solomon Islands

Small island states are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of disease epidemics caused by invasive and alien species. At the 5th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Solomon Islands stated, *"If [biological agents] are used in the field, they would also attack indigenous peoples. Microbes cannot tell the difference between indigenous peoples' legitimate use of crops and something else. Solomon Islands believes that the Convention on Biological Diversity must speak up when agents are developed to eradicate crops."*²⁰

Solomon Islands requested from COP a strong statement asserting the importance of biological diversity and condemning any attempt to eradicate a cultivated species with a biological agent.

United Kingdom

Apart from the US, the UK is the only country that has funded work on biological weapons against illicit crops. The UK financially supports UNDCP's opium poppy eradication research in Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, this policy does not appear to be fully supported by the British government. Prime Minister Blair's government has been repeatedly plied with sensitive questions from Parliament. Prominent British Cabinet minister Mo Mowlam, in a Bogotá press conference on September 13, 2000, said the UK was against the use of biological eradication in Colombia. Mowlam told the Associated Press *"Britain ... opposes employing biological agents the United States has urged Colombia to use."*²¹

INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Convention on Biological Diversity – The African Group

The African Group at the Convention Biological Diversity (CBD) has called upon the CBD Conference of Parties, as part of its work on agricultural biodiversity, to adopt a resolution containing the following statement: *"Calls on Parties not to approve release and/or use of biological agents such as an 'agent green' that may have negative impact on the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biological diversity"*.²² The proposal was supported in formal interventions by African countries including Ethiopia. No action has yet been taken on the proposal, and others to also address the issue under the Convention's work on Alien and Invasive Species. Debate is possible at upcoming meetings of the CBD.

¹⁸ See Real Audio file at <http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/cop5/22may.html>

¹⁹ See <http://www.nationaudio.com/News/DailyNation/20072000/Features/Features6.html>

²⁰ See Real Audio file at <http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/cop5/22may.html>

²¹ Slesky, Andrew, Associated Press. September 13, 2000. 'UK, US split over Colombia Drug War'. Document No. ED2000091314000035

²² Proposal presented to Contact Group on Agricultural Biodiversity, May 22, 2000.

United Nations Drug Control Program (UNDCP)

The United Nations Drug Control Program (UNDCP) has been the US and UK's only ally in the development of biological eradication agents. The testing and deployment of *Fusarium oxysporum* in Colombia was originally to be carried through a UNDCP - Colombia agreement funded by the US. Due to the intense opposition, Colombia rejected the contract offered by UNDCP, opting instead for the "*hongo criollo*" project developed by the Environment Ministry.

Despite Colombia's rejection of the US-UNDCP contract in favor of the *hongo criollo*, through mid-2000 the US and UNDCP continued to say that they would fund and implement (respectively) biological eradication studies in Colombia with *Fusarium oxysporum* and other biological eradication agents. Senior US officials told the press that EN-4 testing was proceeding, ignoring denials from Colombian leaders.²³

Without a clear mandate and under pressure to abandon forced biological eradication, UNDCP issued ambiguous statements in September and October as it increasingly appeared to be a US stalking horse in the public eye. Finally, on November 2nd, 2000, UNDCP clearly retreated from projects on biological agents in the Andes in letter sent to civil society organizations.²⁴ UNDCP has not, however, renounced the strategy of using biological weapons and must be carefully monitored until it does. UNDCP's Asian anti-poppy research is advancing at full speed while, in South America, the position at time of publication is "*UNDCP is neither implementing, or planning to implement, or discussing the possibility of implementing a biocontrol project in Colombia or anywhere else in the Andes.*"

Organization of American States (OAS)

The Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), the OAS drug control office, has distanced itself from the US and UNDCP. CICAD says it has no plans whatsoever to become involved in the development of biological agents to eradicate illicit crops. According to CICAD's Acting Director, the group has "*never even considered*" use of biological agents in eradication.²⁵

CICAD does collaborate with the US Department of Agriculture on legitimate biological control research related to cacao diseases. The intent is to make cacao (the source of chocolate) more profitable in coca growing regions and present a viable alternative to coca for farmers. But because the US and UNDCP continue to use the "biological control" pseudonym for the development of biological weapons, CICAD's programs have been endangered. Coca farmers and others in areas where illicit crops are cultivated have become suspicious that "biological control" research may be used to develop anti-crop weapons.

The United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP)

On several occasions, UNDCP and the US have made misleading claims that UNEP plays a supporting role in UNDCP's biological agent research. These statements have prompted alarm at governments and civil society organizations that feel it is highly inappropriate for the UN environmental watchdog to involve itself in forced eradication. In response to requests for clarification of UNEP's position received by its headquarters in Nairobi and regional office in Mexico City, a special assistant of UNEP Director Klaus Töpfer disputed the US and UNDCP claims in a letter sent to civil society organizations on July 2nd, 2000. According to the letter, UNEP is "*not involved*" in biological eradication.²⁶

Despite US and UNDCP statements to the contrary, UNEP says it has not endorsed, participated in, or provided environmental oversight for the development of biological weapons in the Drug War.

Andean Community

The Committee of Andean Environmental Authorities (CAAM) issued a statement against the use of biological eradication at its September 5-6, 2000 meeting in Lima, Peru. The CAAM, a roundtable of

²³ See interview with the US State Department's chief of Andean policy, Philip Chicola, at http://eltiempo.terra.com.co/20-10-2000/inte_5.html.

²⁴ See: <http://www.sunshine-project.org/laledemoz.html>

²⁵ See: <http://www.sunshine-project.org/pr131100.html>

²⁶ See: <http://www.sunshine-project.org/pr100800.html>

Andean Environment Ministries, is a body of the Andean Community, a regional intergovernmental organization comprised of Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. CAAM rejected the use of *Fusarium oxysporum* as a tool for eradication of illicit crops in any member state. CAAM also supported legal and policy measures at the national level, including the legal ban of any type of biological agent for coca eradication enforced by Peru (see above).²⁷ All of Colombia's Andean neighbors, plus Bolivia, are on record both collectively and individually against the use of biological weapons to eradicate illicit crops.

Amazonian Cooperation Treaty

Currently serving as Secretary of the Amazonian Cooperation Treaty (TCA – *Tratado de Cooperación Amazónica*), Ecuador's Environment Minister Rendón is undertaking consultations with fellow Environment Ministers of member states. In August 2000, Rendón sent a letter to the environmental ministers of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Guyana, Peru, Venezuela and Surinam suggesting TCA consider action against the use of biological weapons in the Amazon region. The suggestion is expected to be considering in upcoming meetings of the Treaty.

CIVIL SOCIETY

There are a large number of civil society initiatives against the use of biological weapons in the Drug War bringing together groups expert on drug policy, environment, human health, indigenous peoples, and biological weapons. Important examples of CSO activity to date include:

- Strong condemnation of biological weapons and action by indigenous peoples to protect their threatened environment and resource rights. See: <http://www.ceudes.org/bioloindigenas.htm>
- Seminars in Bogotá and Quito sponsored by peace, biological weapons, environment, and drug policy organizations. See: www.sunshine-project.org/quitoagenda.html
- Proposals for peaceful, safe, and cooperative alternatives to forced chemical and biological eradication of coca and opium poppy. See: www.tni.org/drugs/research/dpcol.htm
- The Movimiento de Agua, a broad-based CSO letter writing campaign that seeks to convince the Colombian government to abandon biological eradication: www.sunshine-project.org/agua/
- The Declaration of Dakar against biological eradication. Signed in May 2000 by more than 120 NGO representatives from 40 countries. See: www.panna.org

IN COLOMBIA

In Colombia important sectors of the government are opposed to the use of biological agents. A group of 18 Colombian legislators (12 senators and 6 congressmen, including the country's indigenous senators) have urged the Pastrana Administration to abandon its plans.²⁸ Colombia's Defender of the People (*Defensor del Pueblo*), a constitutionally mandated government legal ombudsman, has studied biological eradication and urged Colombia to prohibit use of biological agents.²⁹

The Ministry of Environment's partners in the illicit crops project containing the biological weapons work, the semi-governmental *Instituto de Investigaciones de Recursos Biológicos Alexander von Humboldt* and *Instituto Amazónico de Investigaciones Científicas* (SINCHI) are less than enthusiastic. The project has provoked resignations at SINCHI, while the agency's director, in response to a legal petition for information from the indigenous peoples and NGOs, sought to distance SINCHI from the work, saying that it is a partner in the project; but that SINCHI did not know what the Environment Ministry was up to. The Humboldt Institute, responding to a related petition, professed similar ignorance of the status of the project, saying: "*the Institute has not undertaken or plans to undertake any research project on biological control of illicit crops*"; but did concede that it is a partner in some components of the work.³⁰

²⁷ <http://www.comunidadandina.org/document/declar/7-9-00.htm>

²⁸ The list of congressmen can be found at <http://www.sunshine-project.org/agua/listado.html>

²⁹ Defensoría del Pueblo. 2000. "los cultivos ilícitos. Política Mundial y Realidad en Colombia". Imprenta Nacional de Colombia. Bogotá. P. 131-132. Also in: <http://www.defensoria.org.co/comunicados/cp516.html>

³⁰ Letter sent by Cristián Samper to Fundepúblico on November 8, 2000.