



CNNJ at UN Sustainable Development Meeting

by *Trina Paulus*

Cornucopia members Una McGurk and Trina Paulus will spend two weeks at the United Nations as part of the Commission on Sustainable Development's annual meeting, CSD-19.

We're Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) delegates for the international woman's movement, "the Grail." Trina has been part of the Grail since the age of 18.

www.thegrail.org,
www.Grailville.org.

This year's themes are: **Transport, Chemicals, Waste Management**

(**Hazardous & Solid Waste**), **Mining**, and a **'10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption & Production Patterns.**'

This gathering feels like a big circus because there are so many things going on at any one time. One has to find a certain thread and focus or risk getting lost in the abundance of meetings and information. This will be Una's first UN experience and my fourth. I have gone to two UN meetings which focused on agriculture, and another focused on energy.

At the energy meeting, Cornucopia board member Bob Simpson and I were part of an "Energy Caucus." Regular folks like us were able to speak directly to various government ministries and have them share their energy plans with us. Of course, our interest was to encourage them to develop renewables.

As an American I was asked to monitor the daily briefings of the United States delegation, who were then (and still are) pushing nuclear as a renewable energy.

In CSD 17, the US delegates defended genetic engineering (GE) strongly.

In response to my questions about the unsustainability of patented GE crops, they told me that "we had to keep GE as one of the tools in our toolbox." This is repeated by our present USDA head,

Tom Vilsack, a GE proponent. He claims that organic agriculture and genetic engineering can coexist. I have not seen any evidence of this, and much evidence that GE crops contaminate the soil, and neighboring plants – they cannot coexist on the same planet.

This year is also a preparation year for the 20th anniversary of Earth Day in 2012. Called "Rio +20," it is scheduled to be held back where it started: in Rio.

I was surprised when I first attended a UN meeting how few Americans were there — especially since we are the host country and many of us live within commuting distance.

I try to be at the UN and through security by 9 AM to be at the daily briefing for NGOs: to see what

things progressed during the previous day, and to prepare for the day ahead. Usually we NGOs are on the same page, whether it's about the disastrous takeover the world's food supplies, the problems of

nuclear proliferation, the need for renewable energy, and a desire for serious cuts of fossil fuels and global warming gases. It is often a thankless long job to work within the United Nations structures, but we need the UN, as the only place countries can talk to each other rather than fight. The UN also needs NGOs and the rest of civil society (the "regular folks") to keep the money interests from totally dominating. ☹

