Now, as perhaps never before, we are acutely aware of the need to conserve the earth's natural resources. In natural and managed ecosystems, biological processes are integral to the function and stability of the biosphere, making it essential that biological resources are used and managed in an ecologically sustainable manner.

As a result there has been a growing and vigorous global debate on biological issues in government, in scientific, legal and environmental societies, in commercial organisations and in the media. Each day both the scientific and popular press raise new issues: bovine spongiform encephalitis, a breast cancer gene, the emergence of resistant strains to tuberculosis, the patenting of genetically engineered organisms, farmers' rights, the discovery of primitive life in seemingly impossible environments and its potential for new applications. The issues raised by these discoveries and applications are not simple. All encompass many disciplines, involve many players and are often made more complex by scientific uncertainties.

A prime example of a development where biopolicy issues are fundamental is the Convention on Biological Diversity. This new legal instrument presents a series of obligations and benefits to the signatories and impinges on the lives and work of many groups, from taxonomists to lawyers, from farmers to computer experts, from politicians to indigenous populations, teachers and economists. It is clear that a great number of policy...
issues will need to be addressed and that the debate should be wide and authoritative. It is appropriate, therefore, that the first paper to be published in this journal focuses on specific aspects of the Convention.

With increasing global access to the Internet - it is predicted that only 7 countries will remain without access to the network by the end of the century - we are provided with a powerful distribution mechanism that has the potential to reach all who have an interest in biopolicy and to provide equitable access to high quality information at the lowest possible cost. The publishers, editors and editorial board of Biopolicy have agreed that the journal will take full advantage of the new technology by adopting an online-only policy and by providing links to appropriate resources from within the full text of papers. All documents published will be peer-reviewed and formally archived to secure future availability. All abstracts will be free and the cost of full text and graphics of papers will be kept at a cost recovery level.

The journal thus offers a means by which biopolicy publications can be conveniently harnessed and distributed. The potential of the Internet to link related documents, provide access to databases from within a contribution, add useful resources (links to relevant sites, a dedicated e-mail service, a news facility, an address book) and simply link authors with the user community, offers new and exciting possibilities which will inevitably contribute to the advancement of science and to political understanding and cooperation.

The international editorial board looks forward with anticipation to receiving contributions from all corners of the world, that express all shades of opinion and offer all manner of expertise. It is hoped that this journal will become a major vehicle for broadening and informing global discussions on biopolicy.

Published by Bioline Publications 1996

There is no charge for this document.