



Misión Permanente de Costa Rica ante las Naciones Unidas

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Statement by

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Introduction of the Draft Resolution on Human Cloning
to the Sixth Committee

(check against delivery)

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Mr. Chairman,

Allow me, in the first place, to congratulate you for your assumption to the chairmanship of the Sixth Committee. We know and appreciate your broad professional experience and your well-known impartiality, which undoubtedly will enable you to lead our work to a great success. We are also confident that your chairmanship will be an opportunity to strengthen further the already existing friendship relations between Morocco and Costa Rica.

Mr. Chairman,

The issue that we are considering today is of the greatest importance for the future of mankind. Today we must decide whether the international community will adopt a utilitarian ethic that justifies the deliberate creation of human embryos with the purpose of destroying for scientific experiments, or whether the international community will embrace a humanistic ethic that respects human beings in all circumstances. For Costa Rica the answer is clear: the international community must adopt a decisively humanistic ethic that would give priority, in all circumstances, to human beings.

The development of biotechnology offers great possibilities. Every day, new developments in health sciences and scientific research enable us to treat the various diseases that affect mankind. Costa Rica fully supports the development of science. However, the search for new knowledge must have the well-being of mankind as its final goal. My nation thus supports the development of science with principles; within certain ethical limits. The search for new knowledge is not, by itself, an absolute end; in no circumstance, it justifies violating the dignity of a human being.

The ethical limits to scientific research acquire especial importance regarding health sciences, whose object of study is precisely the human being. The development of new biotechnologies poses an ethical problem because, in the wrong minds and in the wrong hands, those technologies could be used to violate human rights and the intrinsic dignity of all human beings.

Human cloning, either with the purpose of creating identical copies of other human beings or to perform scientific experiments, is precisely the area that requires the greatest caution. Cloning reduces the human being to a mere object of industrial production and manipulation.

My country cannot accept the deliberate creation of human embryos with the explicit intention of destroying them for scientific experiments, as it is done in the so-called "therapeutic" cloning. We equally reject any attempt to create "copies" of other human beings. Any kind of human cloning, independently of its stated purposes, is an affront to human dignity.

Moreover, the human cloning techniques constitute an affront to the dignity of women. Due to the inherent risks of the process to extract ovules, which are

indispensable in great numbers to attempt human cloning, these techniques put donor women in serious danger.

Mr. Chairman,

Experimental cloning requires the intentional creation and destruction of human embryos as if they were mere inanimate objects. But human embryos cannot be treated as objects. There is no substantial difference between an embryo, a fetus, a child, and adolescent and an adult. No, those are only differences in their stage of natural development. We were all once embryos and blastocysts. How could we now allow the destruction of human beings in their earliest stage of development only to satisfy to scientific curiosity of some?

Experimental cloning is not necessary. Research on adult stem cells has already proven that they are capable to cure – right now – the same diseases that the proponents of therapeutic cloning seek to cure. In addition, the therapeutic use of adult stem cell does not present any of the ethical and legal questions posed by experimental cloning.

Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to present only two concrete examples among the hundreds that we could mention:

In the annual meeting of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons, held on April 8th, 2002, the case of Mr. Dennis Turner, a Californian victim a Parkinson's disease was presented. His doctor, Dr. Michel Levesque, implanted in his brain his own stem cells and Mr. Turner has recovered his health to the point that he only needs now a minimum of treatment. In fact, he has regained his health to such an extent that just a few weeks ago he made tourism trip to Africa.

On Mach 6th, 2003, ABC News reported on the case of the young Dimitri Bonnville who, in an accident with a hydraulic pistol, suffered serious damaged to his heart. His heart was losing pumping capacity in an accelerated manner. His doctors extracted some stem cells from his blood, multiplied them and injected them back into his heart. Those cells managed to repair the damage and regenerated his heart. Similar experiments, in which heart patients have been cured, have been performed in France and Australia.

These examples show that there is already an open and effective avenue to cure the gravest diseases without need to resort to human cloning. For this reason, Costa Rica, as well as those who support our position, fully supports the research in adult stem cells.

Moreover, to allow experimental cloning will create the conditions for some unscrupulous scientists to attempt reproductive cloning. As noted by Dr. Hwang, the Korean veterinarian that created the first human clones, it is impossible to distinguish between the techniques that he used and those that would be used for reproductive cloning.

Based on these considerations, today I am pleased to introduce formally the draft resolution entitled “International Convention against Human Cloning,” which was published as document A/C.6/59/L.2.

This document has the co-sponsorship of the following 61 countries: Albania, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Benin, Burundi, Chad, Chile, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, United States, Fiji, Philippines, Gambia, Georgia, Grenada, Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Ireland, Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Italia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Micronesia, Nauru, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Portugal, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominican Republic, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vicente and the Grenadines, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, Surinam, Tanzania, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu and Zambia.

In its preamble, our draft resolution acknowledges that human cloning, regardless of its purposes, is incompatible with the respect due to human dignity and expresses the General Assembly’s intention to promote scientific research in the areas of biology and genetics in a way that it respects human rights and that it is done for the benefit of all. The preamble also expresses concern for the potential exploitation of women that could arise from their participation in cloning as egg donors.

Regarding the operative part of our draft resolution, I would like now to highlight only some of its most important aspects. The first operative paragraph reconvenes the Ad Hoc Committee established by General Assembly resolution 56/93 to prepare an international convention against human cloning. This paragraph expressly notes that the convention should only ban those forms of cloning that result in the creation of a human embryo.

The third operative paragraph calls upon all States to prohibit any research and experimentation on human cloning until the International Convention is adopted. The fourth paragraph requests States to adopt the necessary measures to prohibit any genetic engineering techniques that might have a negative impact on human dignity. The fifth paragraph requests that the financial resources that were going to be used for human cloning be used to combat the main health problems that affect developing countries.

The co-sponsors trust that this text will enjoy the greatest support and we invite all delegations that have not yet done so, to join this initiative for human dignity.

Let’s make sure that science is always at the service of mankind and that mankind is never at the service of science!

Thank you