

## UN Delays Cloning Decision

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The United Nations has put off for this year the question of whether to draft a treaty that would ban all human cloning. Diplomats instead settled on a compromise political declaration.

U.S. and Costa Rican-led efforts to start work this year on a total human cloning ban came to an end Friday in the U.N. General Assembly's legal committee.

After months of wrangling, the committee in effect admitted that it was sharply divided on whether to authorize the treaty-drafting procedure. No vote was taken either on a Costa Rican-sponsored resolution for a total ban or on a competing Belgian-sponsored measure that would have left the door open to what is known as therapeutic cloning.

Instead, members accepted an Italian-sponsored resolution that simply urges nations to ban reproductive cloning, something that has near universal support.

The committee chairman, Morocco's ambassador Mohammed Benouna noted that the issue had captured world attention because it addresses the core issue of human dignity. He said it would have been unwise to vote on such a sensitive issue in the absence of a consensus. "This question of cloning is of concern and causes anguish to some given the risks of manipulation of human life, just as it gives hope to others given the prospect of saving lives or mitigate their suffering. Such a dialectic, which is a dialectic of good and evil as we all know is the focus of all beliefs and religions. It is for that reason that, in the bureau, we thought it would be unbearable for the international community to be divided on issue like cloning," he said.

The Italian compromise seemed to satisfy both sides in the debate.

Bernard Siegel, leader of a group favoring therapeutic cloning, applauded the measure. He said the result is that stem cell research will continue.

U.S. State Department spokesman Adam Ereli called the outcome a moderate success. He noted that the measure does not endorse cloning.

Costa Rica's U.N. ambassador Bruno Stagno expressed optimism that work on a total cloning ban could still begin next year. In a telephone interview, he rejected the argument

that a cloning ban would inhibit scientific research. "We are not against science, we are fully for adult stem cell research. That is what most of the scientific community is actually pursuing. Because If you review the peer review scientific journals, the promise for therapies to most diseases that are enumerated lies and there's already evidence, in adult stem cells, which do not solicit any ethical concerns," he said.

Acceptance of the Italian compromise effectively puts off further consideration of the cloning issue until at least next February.