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Press Release

U.N. Decision on Cloning is Clear Victory for Stem Cell Advocates

Patients, Scientists and Advocates win critical decision

Washington -- The Sixth Committee of the United Nations today ended debate on a global treaty to ban human cloning without passing the Costa Rica/U.S. treaty banning therapeutic cloning, handing a clear victory to advocates of stem cell research and the hundreds of millions of people suffering worldwide from devastating conditions and diseases that stem cell research hopes to treat. The proposed treaty would have banned all forms of cloning, including therapeutic cloning, which produces stem cells and could cure diseases and conditions like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, diabetes, spinal cord injuries heart disease, ALS, and other devastating conditions for which treatments must still be found.

The Genetics Policy Institute (GPI), an international nonprofit organization dedicated to establishing a legal framework to advance scientific research and the leading defender of stem cell research worldwide, spearheaded an international patient, scientist and advocate effort to protect therapeutic cloning and embryonic stem cell research in the UN. In 2004, GPI staged a major conference that brought leading stem cell scientists to the UN headquarters from four continents to educate UN missions on cloning issues, cosponsored a patients' press conference and briefing in the UN with the Coalition for Advancement of Medical Research (CAMR), and produced a videotaped message from Christopher Reeve to the UN pleading that therapeutic cloning research not be banned by treaty. GPI also activated support from numerous patients, scientists and organizations who responded by sending more than 7,000 faxes to the UN asking to save therapeutic cloning.

"Today marks another long fought victory for stem cell advocates. The proposed UN treaty must be stopped, and we will continue to fight until there are no more votes. We should not prohibit scientists from exploring new and important stem cell research; we should not discourage funding for ethical research and we must not diminish the hope of millions suffering from diseases and other life threatening conditions. GPI along with dozens of leading scientists from around the world are dedicated to blocking efforts to ban this research through UN action and will continue to urge policy leaders to learn about therapeutic cloning before enacting ill-advised bans," said Bernard Siegel, Executive Director of GPI.

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Therapeutic cloning has widespread support in the U.S. and abroad. The Secretary General of the U.N., Kofi Annan, voiced his support for the research, and many key U.S. allies including South Korea, the U.K., Japan, and Belgium have led the charge in defeating the global ban. In the U.S., leading Members of Congress from both political parties, the National Academy of Sciences, 40 Nobel laureates, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Stem Cell Action Network, Student Society for Stem Cell Research, the California Research and Cure Coalition, American Medical Association, and the Coalition for the Advancement of Medical Research have all concluded that the research is critically important to our understanding of diseases and the development of medical cures needed by millions.

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The Genetics Policy Institute (GPI) is the leading international nonprofit organization dedicated to establishing a legal framework to advance scientific research for future cures and is a leading defender of stem cell research worldwide. Please visit us online at www.genpol.org