

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC BODY CALLS FOR BAN ON HUMAN REPRODUCTIVE CLONING

More than 60 science academies from every continent in the world have called on the United Nations to adopt a ban on human reproductive cloning. The statement was issued by the InterAcademy Panel on International Issues (IAP), a body representing scientific academies worldwide. In the same statement, however, the science academies say that therapeutic cloning should be exempt from the ban.

IAP members will present the statement to delegates of the UN Committee on Cloning, scheduled to meet at UN headquarters in New York City between September 29 and 3 October. The Committee has examined the possibility of issuing a declaration – in UN parlance, a ‘convention’ – that endorses a ban on cloning. Consensus, however, has been hampered by disagreements concerning the scope of such a ban, especially whether the ban should apply to research and therapeutic cloning.

IAP warns that human cloning poses a serious threat to the health of both the cloned child and the mother. Animal studies on reproductive cloning show a high incidence of fetal disorders and spontaneous abortions, and of malformation and death among newborns. According to the statement, there is no reason to suppose that the outcome would be different in humans.

Even if scientific developments meant that one day reproductive cloning could be undertaken without major medical risk, the IAP statement stresses that the practice would continue to face strong ethical, social and economic objections.

The statement, however, goes on to outline the substantial benefits that could be derived from cloning to obtain embryonic stem cells for research and therapeutic purposes. Therefore, IAP contends that such work should be excluded from the ban on human reproductive cloning.

“Human reproductive cloning is unsafe and no responsible scientist would attempt it given the huge health risks that are involved,” says Yves Quéré, co-chair of the IAP executive committee and former foreign secretary of the French Academy of Sciences. “Experience has shown that most cloned pregnancies fail or result in stillborn or deformed offspring. Even if these problems can be solved, serious ethical problems will remain that no one can ignore.”

“Human reproductive cloning is already illegal in some countries,” Quéré adds, “but other countries have yet to pass any laws or regulations. Failure by the international community to issue a worldwide ban on human reproductive cloning will enable unscrupulous individuals to continue to experiment on humans.”

At the same time that IAP is calling for a ban on human reproductive cloning, it is voicing strong support for research and therapeutic cloning.

“Cloning to obtain embryonic stem cells for research and therapeutic purposes holds considerable promise for long-term benefits,” says C.N.R. Rao, president of the Third World Academy of Sciences in Trieste, which hosts the secretariat of IAP. “That is why a ban on research and therapeutic cloning was excluded from the statement.”

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Notes to editors:

1) IAP is a global network of the world’s science academies that is hosted by the Third World Academy of Sciences and headquartered in Trieste, Italy.

2) The following academies have endorsed the IAP statement:

- African Academy of Sciences
- The Caribbean Academy of Sciences
- Latin American Academy of Sciences
- Third World Academy of Sciences
- The Academy of Sciences of Albania
- National Academy of Exact, Physical and Natural Sciences, Argentina
- Australian Academy of Science
- Bangladesh Academy of Sciences
- National Academy of Sciences of Belarus
- National Academy of Sciences of Bolivia
- Brazilian Academy of Sciences
- Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
- Cameroon Academy of Sciences
- Chinese Academy of Sciences
- Academia Sinica, China Taiwan
- Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences
- Cuban Academy of Sciences
- Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic
- Royal Danish Academy of Science and Letters
- Academia de Ciencias de la República Dominicana
- Academy of Scientific Research and Technology, Egypt
- Estonian Academy of Sciences
- The Delegation of the Finnish Academies of Science and Letters
- Académie des Sciences, France
- Georgian Academy of Sciences
- Academy of Athens, Greece
- Hungarian Academy of Sciences
- Indian National Science Academy
- Indonesian Academy of Sciences
- Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities
- Science Council of Japan
- Royal Scientific Society of Jordan
- Kenya National Academy of Sciences
- National Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz Republic
- Latvian Academy of Sciences
- Lithuanian Academy of Sciences
- Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts
- Academia Mexicana de Ciencias
- Academy of Sciences of Moldova
- Mongolian Academy of Sciences
- Academy of the Kingdom of Morocco
- The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences
- Academy Council of the Royal Society of New Zealand
- Nigerian Academy of Sciences
- Norwegian Academy of Sciences and Letters
- Pakistan Academy of Sciences
- Palestine Academy for Science and Technology
- Academia Nacional de Ciencias del Peru
- National Academy of Science and Technology, Philippines
- Romanian Academy
- Russian Academy of Sciences
- Académie des Sciences et Techniques du Sénégal
- Singapore National Academy of Sciences
- Academy of Science of South Africa
- National Academy of Sciences of Sri Lanka
- Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences
- Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan
- Thai Academy of Science and Technology
- Turkish Academy of Sciences
- The Uganda National Academy of Sciences
- The Royal Society, UK
- US National Academy of Sciences
- Academia de Ciencias Fisicas, Matemáticas y Naturales de Venezuela