



BOLLETTINO

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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA 6a COMMISSIONE DELL'ASSEMBLEA GENERALE DELLE NAZIONI UNITE SUL PUNTO 150: "INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION AGAINST THE REPRODUCTIVE CLONING OF HUMAN BEINGS"

INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA 6a COMMISSIONE DELL'ASSEMBLEA GENERALE DELLE NAZIONI UNITE SUL PUNTO 150: "*INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION AGAINST THE REPRODUCTIVE CLONING OF HUMAN BEINGS*"

Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento che l'Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite, il Nunzio Apostolico S.E. Mons. Celestino Migliore, ha pronunciato ieri davanti alla 6a Commissione dell'Assemblea Generale della Nazioni Unite sul punto 150: "*International convention against the reproductive cloning of human beings*":

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. CELESTINO MIGLIORE

Mr. Chairman,

Human cloning has now been on the agenda of the United Nations since the end of 2001.

From the beginning, it has appeared clear that, in spite of the agenda item's name, "International Convention against the reproductive cloning of human beings", the purpose of this exercise has actually been to find a juridical framework that would allow and accelerate the advancement of medical science in the procurement and use of stem cells, and to identify and ban practices that would be disrespectful to human dignity.

From a purely scientific point of view, the therapeutic progress already achieved with so-called adult stem cells, namely stem cells from bone marrow, cord blood, and other mature tissues appears very promising. Embryonic cloning, for its part, is as yet far from delivering the progress that its advocates suggest. There has yet to be a definite clinical success using cloned embryonic stem cells even in animal experiments. The work that would make it safe to experiment in this manner on human beings will likely take a very long time, and these obstacles may never be overcome.

Moreover, the distinction that is sometimes drawn between reproductive and therapeutic cloning seems specious. Both involve the same technical cloning process and differ only in goal. Both forms of cloning involve

disrespect for the dignity of the human being. In fact, from an ethical and anthropological standpoint, so-called therapeutic cloning, creating human embryos with the intention of destroying them, even if undertaken with the goal of possibly helping sick patients in the future, seems very clearly incompatible with respect for the dignity of the human being, making one human life nothing more than the instrument of another. Further, given the fact that cloned embryos would be indistinguishable from embryos created by in vitro fertilization and could readily be implanted into wombs and brought to birth, we believe it would be practically impossible to enforce an instrument that allowed one type of cloning while banning the other.

If adult stem cell research has already demonstrated conditions for success and raises no ethical questions, it is only reasonable that it should be pursued before science embarks on cloning embryos as a source for stem cells, something which remains problematic both scientifically and ethically.

Does this mean we are opposed to scientific progress? Rather, we would say that the choice is not between science and ethics, but between science that is ethically responsible and science that is not. Thousands of lives have been saved by adult stem cells, most often in the treatment of leukemia and other cancers. Solid scientific evidence has now established that adult stem cell transplants are safe, and preliminary results suggest they will be able to help people with Parkinson's disease, spinal cord injury, heart damage and dozens of other conditions. The danger is that this progress toward cures will be halted or slowed down by the diversion of attention and resources towards the cloning of human beings as a potential source of stem cells.

Mr. Chairman, my delegation would like to conclude its remarks by making two final points. First of all, this Committee and the General Assembly appear to be the proper fora for our deliberations, since the questions surrounding human embryonic cloning know no boundaries of geography, culture or season. But even more importantly, the subject of this particular scientific pursuit concerns the nature and existence of human life itself. Therefore a body that is supra-national has the proper scope to encompass the full breadth of this issue. This matter - of vital interest to the human race today and in the future - properly belongs here in this universal body.

Secondly, we are convinced that the subject of human embryonic cloning can be best addressed by a juridical instrument, since the rule of law is essential to the promotion and protection of human life. It is by the rule of law, based on right reason, that societies can properly regulate whatever appears to challenge our fundamental notions of human life and dignity. It is in this regard, Mr. Chairman, that my Delegation based the information Paper, to which reference was made, on the logic of right reason and not on religious beliefs.

In conclusion, the Holy See remains convinced of the wisdom of an international juridical instrument that comprehensively bans human embryonic cloning.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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