

November 20, 2004

## **U.S. Drops Effort for Treaty Banning Cloning**

By **WARREN HOGE**

**NITED NATIONS**, Nov. 19 - Faced with polarizing division in the 191-member General Assembly, the United States on Friday abandoned its aggressively pursued attempt to obtain a United Nations treaty banning all human cloning, including that done in the name of medical research.

The outcome - an agreement to come up with a nonbinding declaration against cloning to reproduce humans - fell far short of the American goal and represented a setback for President Bush. He called for a worldwide ban on all cloning when he addressed the United Nations General Assembly in August, and he made limiting stem cell and other related research an issue in his presidential campaign.

All 191 United Nations members have agreed on the need for a treaty to prohibit reproductive cloning. But a vote has been stalled for three years by sharp differences over whether to broaden the ban, as the United States wishes, to prohibit cloning to create stem cells for research, part of a field known as therapeutic cloning.

The push for a total ban has set the Bush administration against close allies like Britain and much of the world's scientific establishment, who contend that it would block research on cancer, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, diabetes, spinal cord injuries, multiple sclerosis and other conditions. The White House argues that enough stem cells from human embryos exist for research and that cloning an embryo for any reason is unethical.

Negotiations have been going on for more than a year in the General Assembly's legal committee, which draws up treaties. A vote was scheduled for Friday on two competing versions, but with scant hope of the kind of consensus emerging considered necessary for an effective treaty.

The United States backed a resolution proposed by Costa Rica to outlaw all forms of human cloning, while opponents of such an absolute prohibition supported a Belgian measure banning reproductive cloning outright and offering nations three options for therapeutic cloning: outlawing it, putting a moratorium on the practice, or regulating it through national legislation to prevent misuse.

Instead of proceeding to a showdown vote on Friday night, the committee agreed instead to take up a nonbinding declaration proposed by Italy with ambiguous language that avoided raising objections and to schedule meetings in February to shape the final wording. The Italians' proposal prohibits "any attempts to create human life through cloning processes and any research intended to achieve that aim."

Regardless of what language emerges, the result will be a declaration, not a treaty, which would have been the outcome had either the Costa Rican or Belgian versions been adopted. Because of that, nations will be under considerably less pressure to change their existing views on cloning.

"A declaration is important for what it's not," said Bernard Siegel, the executive director of the Genetics Policy Institute, who had lobbied against the American-led campaign. "It is not a treaty, it is nonbinding, and it will have no chilling effect on therapeutic cloning, and stem cell research will advance. We consider this a triumph."

[Copyright 2004 The New York Times Company](#) | [Home](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [Help](#) | [Back to Top](#)