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Press Release

Landmark Conference for United Nations on Human Cloning and Stem Cell Research

Leading Scientists from four continents to address UN delegates in New York City

Coral Gables, June 2, 2004: The Genetics Policy Institute (GPI) today hosted a landmark event for United Nations delegates focusing on the science of reproductive and therapeutic cloning.

"The Genetics Policy Institute and scientific leaders in the biomedical research community have come to the United Nations today to openly discuss the repercussion of an international ban on therapeutic cloning and draw a clear distinction between unethical reproductive cloning and this lifesaving science," said GPI Executive Director Bernard Siegel. "We have gathered the leading scientists from four continents including an historic visit to New York City from notable South Korean scientists, Drs. Hwang and Moon, to dispel the confusion and myths about stem cell research."

Last year, GPI successfully led a grassroots effort to defend therapeutic cloning research in the United Nations, which was considering a ban on all forms of cloning research, including therapeutic cloning. After contentious debate the deliberations were deferred until October 2004.

"A UN vote to ban this important scientific research would be tragic and destroy the hopes of millions suffering from Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, diabetes, cancer, spinal cord injuries, heart disease, ALS and other devastating conditions for which no cure is known," Siegel said. "Every human being is affected by this vote and that is why GPI is leading an international grassroots constituency to fight for medical research for cures. People need to know that therapeutic research, which is not reproductive cloning, will lead to breakthrough cures such as creating replacement tissue that the human body won't reject."

Patient advocate Danny Heumann, who suffered a spinal cord injury at 18, spoke before UN delegates urging them to vote against a UN resolution banning all stem cell research. He explained that therapeutic cloning gives hope to those living with incurable diseases and disabilities. "The UN has an opportunity to show the world that political confusion cannot stand in the way of allowing medical science to alleviate human suffering. People are dying every day because they can't receive the necessary vital organ when it's needed. Just imagine how many lives could be saved if vital organs were cloned for transplant purposes only," Heumann said. "The UN can create Ethical Guidelines allowing therapeutic cloning research to continue. We are at a crossroads and the UN can create sound policy and send the message that valuing human life is top priority."

Today's Science Conference was held at the United Nations Headquarters. Conference panelists included the leading scientists in the fields of somatic-cell nuclear transfer, in vitro-fertilization, experimental biology and regenerative medicine and moderated Dr. Gerald Fischbach of Columbia University with a taped address from Christopher Reeve. Other distinguished scientists speaking before UN delegates included: **Dr. Dalton Dietrich, Miami Project to Cure Paralysis (USA); Dr. Lawrence Goldstein, UC San Diego (USA) ; Dr. Rudolf Jaenisch of MIT and the Whitehead Institute (USA); Dr. Douglas Melton, Harvard University (USA); Dr. Camillo Ricordi, Diabetes Research Institute (USA); Dr. Gerald Schatten, University of Pittsburgh (USA); Dr. Alan Trounson, Monash University (Australia); Dr. John Wagner, University of Minnesota (USA);** and, Dolly the sheep creator **Dr. Ian Wilmut, Roslin Institute (United Kingdom).**

Other speakers included: Dan Perry, President of the Coalition for the Advancement of Medical Research (CAMR); Five-year old patient advocate Emma Arvedon who suffers from type 1 diabetes; and, Dr. John Gearhart of Johns Hopkins University.

The conference was co-sponsored by the United Nations' Asian Group of Legal Experts Meeting, with support from the Alpha-One Foundation, American Society for Cell Biology, American Society for Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, Biotechnology Industry Association, Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation, Coalition for the Advancement for Medical Research, Daniel Heumann Fund for Spinal Cord Research, Diabetes Research Institute, International Society of Stem Cell Research, James Halperin Foundation, Josiah's Will Foundation, Juvenile Diabetes Research Institutes Foundation, Miami Project to Cure Paralysis, Michael J Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research, Monash University (Australia), National Health Council, New York Biotechnology Association, Stem Cell Action Network, Andrew Tobias & Charles Nolan, Brook Byers, Alan Walton, and Darby & Darby.

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The Genetics Policy Institute is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing human reproductive cloning and advocating the responsible use of therapeutic cloning research. We encourage funding and support for stem cell research and sponsor international projects and educational programs relating to the law and regulation of reproductive cloning, therapeutic cloning (SCNT) and stem cell research. GPI serves as a gateway to the public, media and key decision-makers regarding those issues. GPI is a sponsored project of the National Heritage Foundation, a federally recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit, tax-exempt organization. For more information, please visit www.genpol.org