

Press Release

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**STATEMENT BY
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**AT THE AD HOC COMMITTEE
ON THE CONVENTION AGAINST REPRODUCTIVE
CLONING OF HUMAN BEINGS**

Tuesday, 26 February 2002

United Nations, New York

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of this Ad Hoc Committee. I am confident that under your able leadership we will achieve significant progress. My congratulations are extended as well to the other members of the Bureau.

Mr. Chairman,

Progress in the life sciences has achieved a technical capability for the reproductive cloning of human beings. This achievement has aroused profound concern throughout the international community and a recognition of the need to strengthen cooperation and build a coalition in order to prevent any attempts at human cloning. My delegation welcomes the timely convening of this Ad Hoc Committee, thanks to the initiative of the distinguished delegations of France and Germany, among others, and is fully aware of the significance of commencing the preliminary consideration of a new international convention on this subject. We would like to express our gratitude to the experts who made useful presentations in the Expert-level segment, providing us with basic information and technical assessments.

Mr. Chairman,

Japan holds the position that the reproductive cloning of human beings must never be pursued. Based on this position, in November 2000 the Japanese Diet enacted "The Law Concerning Regulations Relating to Human Cloning Techniques and Other Similar Techniques" which went into force in June 2001. The law makes reproductive human cloning a punishable offense, and provides guidelines strictly regulating the creation of human embryos utilizing cloning. For the time being, the guidelines do not permit the creation of human embryos through cloning.

In the process of elaborating the law and the guidelines, Japan carefully considered and thoroughly discussed every issue relevant to human cloning. We are eager to put the experience we gained through that process at the service of this Committee as it endeavors to establish international measures prohibiting the reproductive cloning of human beings.

My delegation would like to emphasize that the prohibition must be limited to practices directly related to the reproductive cloning of human beings. Our reasons are threefold.

First, as reflected in its own law, Japan prohibits reproductive human cloning because (1) it runs counter to the principle of respect for human dignity, (2) asexual reproduction could lead to confusion in the social order, and (3) the low probability of success endangers human life

as well as the integrity of the human body.

Second, it should be noted that biotechnology is contributing to major advances in medical treatment. The creation through cloning techniques of embryos for therapeutic purposes does not seem to involve the serious problems to which I just referred. Therefore, while human dignity and human rights must be protected, it would be a mistake to close the door to future scientific and technological progress which could save human lives.

Third, and most important, it is imperative that we establish international measures against reproductive human cloning immediately, before any attempts at this practice are made. Time is of the essence. While my delegation believes each nation's views, which vary according to its historical, cultural and religious traditions, must be respected, we fear that discussions of difficult ethical problems, such as the treatment of embryos, would require lengthy debate and would not lead us to a conclusion. Japan recognizes the importance of discussing ethical issues in international forums, but believes there are more appropriate occasions on which to do so.

Mr. Chairman,

This is a subject with profound and far-reaching implications. As such, it requires careful and thorough discussion. At the same time, however, we are at a critical crossroads and must proceed expeditiously.

In concluding my remarks, let me therefore once again urge the Ad Hoc Committee to focus its attention on the urgent issue of prohibiting human cloning for reproductive purposes. By doing so, Japan believes we can obtain broader support for our efforts and reach a consensus on a draft convention more swiftly.

Thank you very much.