

PRESS RELEASE

European Parliament

Strasbourg, 20th November 2013

On the occasion of the Universal Children's Day, Members of the European Parliament active in the Bioethics Intergroup published an open letter expressing their concern over regulatory efforts in the United Kingdom, the only country worldwide to propose the approval of a medical technique known as "mitochondrial replacement".

This technique requires the combination of genetic material from more than two progenitor persons and would result in inheritable germ-line modifications for any resulting children. Such a biologically extreme procedure raises a host of serious safety, efficacy, ethical, legal and social issues. Moreover, the consequences of this genetic manipulation to determine the traits of future children are unforeseeable. Developed to help a small number of women affected by a rare genetic disease, this procedure would affect all of humanity by establishing a precedent for cloning and "designer babies".

*"As members of the Bioethics Intergroup in the European Parliament, we urge our colleagues in the United Kingdom to reconsider and withdraw their support of a procedure leading to human germ-line intervention. Allowing this procedure would deal a severe blow to human dignity and our common responsibility towards the well-being of children and our societies",* stressed on behalf of the group its co-chair Miroslav Mikolášik (EPP, Slovakia).

Konrad Szymański (ECR, Poland) underlined that *"the practice of this controversial technique leads to consequences which the legislator cannot foresee. It sets a dangerous precedent both legally and morally. The decision of the British legislators will then impact not only the UK law and society but it will concern all the Member States. The matter at stake is in the interest of the whole international community."*

*"Many people in the UK and all over Europe are concerned about genetic modification in plants. What the UK government is planning is much more severe. It's the creation of genetically modified children. The modification will be inheritable and affect all future generations. Just for the precautionary principle, we should not use such a technology",* added Peter Liese (EPP, Germany).

Today, as we celebrate Universal Children's Day, signatories of the letter reiterated their firm commitment to work towards ethically sound biotechnological progress. They underlined that the development of mitochondrial replacement techniques is not an indicator of progress, but a dangerous and unnecessary technology that would lead to the alteration of the human species and the destruction of our shared human heritage. *"The possibilities and consequences of this technique are ethically undesirable. Progress in technology cannot be called so if it undermines our fundamental morals and values"* concluded Bastiaan Belder (EFD, Netherlands).