**Country: Republic of Senegal**

**Committee: Health Committee**

**Topic Area: Modification of the Human Genome**

Senegal has involved itself greatly with the modification of the human genome and ethical and practical entailments. Senegal has been using genetically modified plants to counter the low fertility of its lands, is therefore already involved in genetic engineering and thus has developed an opinion on the topic. The modification of plants is legal in Senegal, and so is the modification of the human genome except for cloning by nucleic transfer, which has been highly condemned.

In May 2016 the African Society of Human Genetics (AfSHG) had a meeting in Dakar, Senegal to discuss the topic of “Strengthening Human Genetics Research in Africa”. In this meeting it was decided to take measures to improve the capacity of development in genomics and simultaneously promoting the careers of young African scientist and utilise genetic modifications to benefit the health of Africans. This brought the creation of the Senegalese Society of Human Genetics. The AfSHG, founded in 2003, had the purpose to attract African scientists and to facilitate the networking among them in collaboration with the H3Africa.

Senegal’s different associations (Senegalese Cancer Research Study Group, Faculty of medicine, etc…) are already in the process of research on ways to utilise genetic modification: haematological cancer treatment, treating Imatinib with lymphocyte infiltrates, molecular diagnosis and resequencing of genes involved in Parkinson’s disease. The main research methods being used at this moment are cytogenetics and monogenic disease mutation testing all the way to next generation sequencing. Senegal believes that proper advances in genetics would benefit greatly the Senegalese society to face the infectious diseases. They have already succeeded in creating a banana that dubs as a vaccine by modifying a bacterium capable of producing insulin. This helps provide an easier and cheaper remedy to people affected by diseases that unbalance the process of metabolism.

In 2016 UNESCO’s meeting in Dakar brought the implementation of a National Committee on Bioethics (NCB). This committee was created to discuss the different questions raised by genetic modification and will consist of all countries in the Sahel Region. Senegal follows the “Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights”, put in place by UNESCO. A following meeting of the National Bioethics Committees in Dakar will take place from 22-24 March 2018.

The precise position of Senegal as stated in 2002 by our representative M. Cheikh Niang, is the complete revocation of cloning by nucleic transfer. However, Senegal recognises the utility of using such technology for medical purposes. Thus, Senegal tolerates using cloning to replicate AND molecules, organs, plants, tissues and cells but not a human embryo. M. Niang stated that we must advance for the medical and scientific advantages without getting involved in the dehumanisation that brings human cloning. We must not stray from the path of the dignity and the sacred nature of the human being.

However with all these measures being taken, Senegal is in no place at this moment to put in the funds needed to research ways to counter the spreading diseases in Africa killing thousands of innocent Africans every year. This is why, as fellow humans the developed countries should help the advancement in genetic research of Senegal as they themselves are not concerned by such diseases and instead invest in not life saving research. The past activities of Europe and America are the reason our continent is in such financial difficulty so I call on them to accept their responsibilities and help right what they themselves have wronged.