



Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri

NATIONAL BIOETHICS COMMITTEE

**DECLARATION ON THE RIGHT OF CHILDREN
TO A NON-POLLUTED ENVIRONMENT**

(24th September 1999)

abstract

The opinion addresses the issue of ecology and its effect on children's health, elicited by the need to continuously stimulate the serious process of raising awareness regarding improper exploitation of environmental resources, degradation, and pollution, along with its associated risks to human health. For the NBC, the underlying guiding ethic is the principle of prudence, which, when applied to the assessment of the legality of those human actions which have an environmental impact, bestows "the burden of proof" on those intending to introduce new technology (including biotechnology), in order to guarantee the non-harmful effects on man.

In the light of the demonstrated correlation between the level of pollution and the problems it brings to health, the NBC emphasises that among those individuals more greatly exposed to risk due to their biological condition, the most vulnerable prove to be pregnant women, the elderly, and first and foremost children. The Committee emphasises the need to review the parameters used to quantify and set toxicity threshold values, based on the needs and specific vulnerabilities of children at each stage of their development and for each pollutant. For this purpose, it is possible to use the currently available data, already accurate in its identification of the health risks to children.

The protection of children's health also includes protection against noise pollution, especially in urban areas; special attention is required concerning urban planning and the organisation of services, in order to favour usability and the aesthetic enjoyment of the environment by children. The NBC believes that this redefinition is an essential measure for the tangible promotion of the "citizenship rights of children".