

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **SOUTH AFRICAN SAN COUNCIL : AT !KHWATTU, WESTERN CAPE.**

The South African San Council, representing the first indigenous peoples of Africa, are pleased to celebrate this important milestone together with HGH Pharmaceuticals and the South African Government. It is fitting that the celebration takes place at !Khwa ttu, a San cultural project named in the now extinct language of the !Xam San peoples of South Africa.

Today we represent not only the !Khomani, !Xun and Khwe San peoples of South Africa, who regard traditional or indigenous knowledge as being part of our San heritage.

HGH are developing and commercialising a standardised extract called **Zembrin**<sup>®</sup> made from cultivated material of the South African plant *Sceletium*, which the San have used medicinally since before recorded time. The plant has been called Kanna and Kougoed.

HGH readily acknowledged that the San are the primary holders of traditional knowledge relating to the original uses of *Sceletium* or “Kougoed”, and negotiated a benefit sharing agreement with the San which was finally concluded in February 2008. This agreement states that if and when this product is commercialised, the San will receive a share of the benefits.

The San have in turn recognised the specific role played by two rural communities in advancing the research into the properties of the *Sceletium*, namely the Paulshoek and Nourivier communities of Namaqualand, and have included them as equal recipients of the benefits under this agreement.

This Benefit Sharing Agreement is fully compliant with the Convention for Biological Diversity of 1992 with the subsequent 2002 Bonn Guidelines, which together encourage the “equitable sharing of benefits” derived from the use of traditional knowledge. South Africa is a signatory to these binding conventions.

We celebrate this prior informed consent agreement as an example of “best practice” in an area that is still evolving internationally. The San are proud of the recognition that is given to them as the first peoples of the subcontinent, and as the primary holders of this traditional knowledge. We are also humble in acknowledging that the issue of “who owns the knowledge” is one that needs to be resolved carefully and with respect for the other holders of traditional knowledge.

There have been recent claims in the press by so-called “Khoisan” movements for various rights to be recognised, including language rights, land rights and the right to the benefits of traditional knowledge. We wish to make it clear that we alone speak on behalf of the San peoples of Southern Africa, and that we do not recognise or appreciate the term “Khoisan”. Khoisan is a term that was devised by foreign anthropologists to describe both the San and the Khoikhoi peoples of Southern Africa, and the term is misleading, even insulting when used to describe San peoples.

We are grateful to our partner in this agreement, HGH Pharmaceuticals, as well as to the South African Department of Environmental Affairs, for their commitment to make this agreement successful in the interests of South Africa, as well as of the individual role-players. We look forward to **Zembrin**<sup>®</sup> becoming an international success.

***Andries Steenkamp***

*Chairman. South African San Council: (1 October 2010)*