



**International
Science Council**

**1st Meeting of the International Science Council's
Committee for Freedom and Responsibility in Science**

18 & 19 November 2019

International Science Council
5, rue August Vacquerie
Paris 75116

MEETING REPORT

Attendees

Daya Reddy (chair), Saths Cooper (vice-chair), Craig Callender, Enrique Forero, Robin Grimes, Cheryl Praeger, Sawako Sirahase, Hans Thybo, Nadia Zakhary (Mon 18 Nov, half-day Tue 19 Nov)

Roger Ridley (CFRS Special Advisor), Francine Harland (CFRS support)

ISC: Mathieu Denis, Heide Hackmann (items 1 and 2), Alison Meston, Lizzie Sayer and Zhenya Tsoy (item 7), Miia Ylöstalo-Joubert

Special session (item 6): Visitor: April Tash (UNESCO). ISC staff was invited to attend the special session.

Apologies: Richard Bedford, Peter Strohschneider

Day One: Monday, 18 November 2019

1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 Introductions

The chair welcomed the committee members to the meeting and invited them to introduce themselves.

1.2 Practical note on logistics

The travel documentation was noted. Committee members were encouraged to return their travel reimbursement and conflict of interest forms as soon as possible after the meeting.

Committee members did not declare any additional conflicts of interest.

The committee **agreed** that conflicts of interest should be a standing item for all meetings.

1.3 Adoption of the meeting agenda

The meeting agenda was adopted with no additional items. The order of some items was subsequently adjusted to reflect availability of time and attendees.

2. Induction to ISC

2.2 International Science Council – an overview

Heide Hackman, ISC Executive Director, provided an overview of the structure, governance, action plan and activities of ISC.

The Committee **noted** that:

- The new CFRS is more closely integrated into ISC as all advisory committees, including CFRS, have a chair and vice-chair from the Governing Board.
- Responsibility in Science includes both individuals and institutions.
- The need for the committee to engage effectively with ISC members and ensure individuals (ISC members' members) are being reached.
- Changes to the regional structure will aim at building capacity in regions rather than an individual focus.
- Generally, ISC does not engage with advocacy but it is important to advocate for science in general, including responsible conduct.
- The ISC action plan is a framework that is flexible and open to new opportunities that may arise.
- The Secretariat will make a copy of the presentation available on the sharefile.

2.3 Introduction to CFRS

The President introduced the history of the Committee and outlined the current Action Plan.

The Committee **noted** that:

- The ISC Action Plan was published before the Advisory Bodies were appointed. The development was led by the ISC Governing Board.
- CFRS will contribute to some projects in Domain 3 and 4 led by other working groups and committees.
- Project 4.6 mentioned in the original CFRS Action Plan (CFRS1/2.1), is not listed under Domain 4 in the final ISC Action Plan adopted by the GB. The work of the CFRS is presented separately in the ISC Action Plan (Section 4: Defending the Free and Responsible Practice of Science, p. 38-40).
- CFRS is expected to develop this project and to give substance to the ISC vision and mission.
- The CFRS Terms of References agreed by the Governing Board outline the role the

Committee is expected to play.

3. CFRS work plan and priorities

3.1 Learning from previous CFRS projects

Roger Ridley, Special Advisor to the new committee and Executive secretary to the previous CFRS, summarized the work and approaches of the previous committee.

The Committee **noted** and discussed the competing characteristics of short-term reactive work responding to violations to freedom in science, and the longer-term strategic work articulating and promoting freedom and responsibility in science.

Dr Ridley encouraged the new CFRS to think of new ways of working that would increase the impact of its work. Future possibilities could include developing a toolkit for good practices, advocating the work of CFRS via social media, releasing public statements, writing op-ed articles, and using diplomatic channels.

The Committee **noted** that there is often a lack of evidence in many of the freedom cases and that any public statements by ISC need to be consistent with the available evidence.

The Committee **agreed**:

- The general principle that statements and letters about freedom cases should be public, except in some individual cases where releasing information could complicate the situation for those concerned.
- That the CFRS could issue statements about general issues in lieu of multiple individual cases, for example pointing out downsides of policies in some countries, and that such ISC statements and letters would be published in the press.

3.2 Selection criteria for Freedom and Responsibility topics

Roger Ridley presented the work programme guiding principles and the proposed selection criteria for individual and generic cases.

The Committee **agreed**:

Work programme guiding principles

- The issues addressed must be concerned substantially with science on topics related to freedom and responsibility;
- The issues addressed must have global implications, and those for which ISC is the most natural organization to fill the need;
- A global audience or audiences at which the work is aimed must be clearly identified along with the intended impact;
- There must be a feasible pathway to that impact identified;
- Advisory notes, papers and other such material for publication must be peer reviewed prior to publication;
- Expertise involved in the work programme should be multi-disciplinary and capture the necessary diversity of global perspectives that ISC represents.

Criteria for generic and individual freedom case selection

- The issue(s) must be concerned substantially with science, or with the freedom of individuals

as a consequence of pursuing scientific activities;

- Human rights cases which happen to involve a scientist are generally out of scope;
- The issue should generally be one for which ISC can take a public view for transparency and maximum impact;
- There should be sufficient evidence available to support a defensible ISC position and/or published material should be able to be crafted in a way which avoids perception of advocacy or uninformed opinion.

The Committee **reaffirmed** the need to ensure there is sufficient evidence to support its position on cases of freedom and tailor its statements to the evidence available.

The Committee **noted** that:

- It is not possible to write criteria to cover every occasion. The committee would need to discuss issues case by case and agree whether proposed cases fit the scope of the CFRS.
- Science should be considered in a broad rather than restrictive sense and that the terms 'research' and 'knowledge' could be used where appropriate.
- Responsibility in science should include the responsibility to engage with communities and be open to community needs and aspirations.
- Translating statements into the primary language of the main audience is likely to increase impact and influence of public statements.

3.3. Initial work plan

The Committee **discussed** the CFRS project proposal 4.6 *Freedom and responsibility in the 21st century: a contemporary perspective of the responsible practice of science* and **noted** that this would be a substantial part of the work of the Committee in its first two years.

The Committee **noted** the delay regarding the initial timeline described in the full project proposal (CFRS1/3.3) and discussed options for constituting the expert working group.

The Committee **agreed**:

- To accept the proposed project 4.6 as part of its initial work plan;
- To a subgroup of the Committee consisting of Robin Grimes and Cheryl Praeger, with assistance from Roger Ridley, to draft a succinct terms of reference for the Expert Working Group, a one-page summary of the ISC action plan for ISC members, consider appropriate framing questions for approaching ISC members, and circulate to all CFRS committee members for comment;
- To then convene an expert working group to take the work forward;
- To adopt an approach to the expert working group combining some members of CFRS and some independent experts;
- To seek nominations from ISC members, noting that members would need guidance re the skills that are needed to do the work;
- To support, in principle, an international workshop to assist in developing the content of the outputs once the purpose and usefulness of such a workshop is established by the expert working group;
- That all material will be independently peer reviewed prior to publication.

The Committee **noted** that, in addition, CFRS will be involved in other projects described in the ISC Action Plan led by the ISC Committee on Science Planning (CSP), and that the actual role of the CFRS in these projects will need to be discussed and decided in due course.

The Committee **discussed** ways to respond to ongoing freedom issues, and whether the ISC should react to tweets and posts online on occasions where there is an opportunity for ISC's voice to be part of public comment on issues.

The Committee **noted** the need for its members to be alerted to issues as they rise and underlined that any tweets or re-tweets by ISC would need proofing, and thus a procedure would need to be developed.

The Committee **agreed:**

- That the tweets and messages from the ISC should be neutral (e.g. *'the ISC has taken note'*) rather than judgemental in their tone, subject to the available evidence;
- To consult ISC Unions and / or members and regional experts to verify information where feasible, while noting the need for urgency in some cases.

4. Individual and Generic Cases

4.1 Overview of current cases

Francine Harland gave a brief overview of recent and current cases of potential interest to CFRS, highlighting the variety of cases raised with ISC and CFRS thorough the year. Dr Harland informed the Committee members on the role of international networks in providing a two-way conduit for information on cases.

4.2 Generic cases

The committee **discussed** which cases to close; which cases to continue following for potential later action; and any actions required for current cases.

Committee member Hans Thybo informed noted his close connections with Turkey and offered to recuse himself from participation in the discussion of Turkish cases. The Chair responded that the aim of the session was to overview the recent cases, and therefore there was no need for him to step out.

Generic cases	Decision
<p><u>Turkey</u></p> <p>The Committee noted the previous committee's actions in respect of the arrest of academics in Turkey following the coup, and the positive recent developments in Turkey with many Academic for Peace being acquitted following the Constitutional Court ruling that these arrests were in violation of academic freedom.</p>	Continue following
<p><u>China</u></p> <p>The Committee discussed recent reports regarding the situation of Uyghur scholars in China. Although it was agreed that the situation is of great concern from a human rights perspectives, there is little proof that the attacks are specifically aimed at scientists or restricting freedom in science in China.</p>	Continue following

<p><u>China/USA</u></p> <p>The Committee discussed recent reports about surveillance and IP security concerns in the US in respect of scientists with international connections.</p>	<p>Consult with US National Academies</p> <p>Continue following</p>
<p><u>Hungary</u></p> <p>The Committee noted the recent developments and structural changes in Hungary's research system. ISC published a statement in June 2019, encouraging Hungary to continue ensuring scientific freedom.</p>	<p>Close the case</p>
<p><u>Brazil</u></p> <p>The Committee discussed developments in Brazil and noted the cuts in funding, in particular concerning social sciences. The committee noted its concern while recognizing that the funding decisions of individual countries are out of scope of the CFRS.</p>	<p>Issue a general statement on the importance of social sciences within government research investment</p>
<p><u>Russia</u></p> <p>The Committee noted a number of freedom-related publicly raised incidents in the past few years.</p>	<p>Consult Russian Academy for advice</p>
<p><u>Calls for boycotts</u></p> <p>The Committee noted a number of recent cases where members have raised the prospect of conference boycotts, and that ISC members are looking at the ISC and CFRS for guidance.</p>	<p>Publish an updated statement on boycotts and circulate to members</p>
<p><u>Visa issues</u></p> <p>The Committee noted recent cases of visa issues at conferences, and its limited ability to act on other countries' visa policies, especially at short notice.</p>	<p>Publish updated guidelines on visas and remind members of the need to apply early.</p>
<p><u>Researchers working in unsafe environments</u></p> <p>The Committee noted the previous case of the killing of Giulio Regeni while carrying out fieldwork in Egypt, and that the previous committee prepared and published guidelines for researchers working in unsafe environments.</p> <p>The previous CFRS had issued guidelines for researchers working.</p>	<p>Close the case</p>

Day Two: Tuesday, 19 November 2019

4.3 Individual cases (carried over from day one)

The Committee is currently following a number of individual cases in the following countries: Turkey, Iran, Argentina, Greece, China.

Roger Ridley reminded the Committee of the need to be selective in following individual cases owing to the potentially large number of such cases.

The Committee **agreed** that, in order to avoid relying on infrequent in-person meetings to make decisions on generic and individual cases, the committee would make decisions between meetings by e-consultation.

5. Networks and Relationships

5.1 Overview of internal relationships including ISC Committees and Regional Offices

Key relationships within ISC and the proposed operating protocols for the committee were discussed.

The Committee **noted** that:

- The responsibilities of the Paris Secretariat require some further discussions with the ISC CEO and the Chair will update the committee at its next meeting.
- The Special Advisor will work with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, and the Paris secretariat, to manage workflow in between meetings.
- The current voluntary country-support arrangement with New Zealand will end in June 2020, and the ISC is awaiting a response from the New Zealand government on ISC's request for renewal of the support arrangement.

5.2 Overview of existing CFRS relationships

Francine Harland noted to the committee the importance of the CFRS relationships with international human rights and other relevant networks.

The committee suggested broadening linkages and contacting Amnesty International, and noted the importance of the United Nations and especially UNESCO relationships.

Committee members **agreed** to suggest other relevant bodies.

The Committee **noted** the interim report on COMEST activities and **agreed** to Leiv Sydnnes, previous CFRS chair, continuing as the ISC representative at COMEST until the current work programme is complete.

6. Special Session: The UN Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers

April Tash, B.A., M.A., Juris Doctor, Programme Specialist, Social and Human Sciences, UNESCO gave a presentation on the UN Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers report. The report outlines common global standards agreed by 195 countries in 2017. It is now in the hands of governments to decide on its implementation and in-country processes.

The committee **noted** that:

- The report considers scientific freedom as a human right; beyond traditional academic freedom. Freedom to speak out in science needs to be more akin to that of journalists.
- Additional responsibility goes hand in hand with additional freedom.
- The report also considers responsibilities of science systems (universities, employers), not just responsibilities of individual scientists.
- The report recognizes that science is just one of the systems that creates knowledge and that a team is currently drafting a factsheet on how local and indigenous knowledge relates to the document.

- The UNESCO team is currently developing indicators to assist in assessing the state of scientific freedom in different countries.
- The considerable interactions that there have been with CFRS and that a possible future collaboration with would be to interview CFRS members on how to involve scientists in the process of distributing the messages in the report.
- That ISC has a great opportunity to ‘own the instrument’ and to promote it to its members and within its networks.

The Committee **agreed** to maintain regular communication with the team at UNESCO.

7. Communications

Alison Meston from the Secretariat updated the committee on ISC’s communications strategy and encouraged the committee members to consider how ISC could be more agile in reacting to news and events, and on how to amplify the ISC message.

Lizzie Sayer from the Secretariat noted that it is important for the communications team to get advance warning if statements are planned, and to be aware of emerging issues.

The Committee **noted** that it needs to take a rigorous approach to make sure appropriate evidence exists before putting out any public statements, and that the communications team can help draft the text and ensure that the tone of ISC statements avoids unsubstantiated judgements.

The Committee **noted** that there would be insufficient content to justify an ongoing independent presence of CFRS on social media and suggested short campaigns to push out specific issues.

The Communication team updated the CFRS on the renewal of the ISC website and the aim to build simpler pathways to find information.

The committee **noted** the communications team’s intent to develop a toolkit of guidance and information to support CFRS statements, reports, videos and advisory notes on the ISC website.

The committee **agreed**:

- To update the ISC online booklet on Freedom and Responsibility in Science;
- To develop a glossary of expressions to be used in public statements;
- That Lizzie Sayer in the Secretariat is the communications point for CFRS in the first instance;
- That transparency is important – publish the most recent committee minutes on website.

8. World Science Forum

The Chair updated the Committee on the upcoming World Science Forum to be held in Budapest from 20 to 23 November 2019. The theme will be “Science Ethics and Responsibility”. The ISC is involved in organizing various sessions and events.

The Committee **noted** that:

- ISC’s predecessor organization ICSU was a founding member of the Forum, which is organized by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, with support from partner organizations UNESCO, ISC, AAAS, TWAS, EASAC and IAP. As a partner organization, ISC is represented on steering committees for these conference, and contributes to the forum declaration.
- The 2017 declaration acknowledged the universal right to science and endorsed freedom and responsibility in Science, and that the 2019 declaration in Budapest would have input from

ISC about ethics and responsibility.

- The next Forum in 2021 will be hosted by South Africa.

9. Future Meetings

9.1 Work between meetings

The Committee **agreed** that, in order to allow the work plan to move ahead, e-meetings on specific items (for example to discuss the individual cases) would be organized as needed between face-to-face meetings.

9.2 Potential timeframe for meetings in 2020 and 2021

The Committee discussed the timing of the next meeting and **noted** the expectation that ISC's advisory committees would normally meet once per year.

The Committee **agreed**:

- That in order to create momentum in the work programme, a meeting in the first half of 2020 would be preferable, possibly in April or May 2020.
- That a meeting of the committee could be held in conjunction with the proposed project 4.6 workshop. However, the scope and aim of that workshop first needs to be agreed.
- That the Committee Chair will discuss possibilities of organizing a second CFRS meeting in 2020 and/or combining the CFRS meeting and the Workshop, with ISC headquarters.
- Seeking host countries is also an option for achieving face-to-face meetings in between the once year planned meetings.