



**International
Science Council**

The global voice for science

ACTIVITY AND ACHIEVEMENT REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

JULY 2018 TO JUNE 2021



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Watch the presentation of the **2018–2021 Activity and Achievement Report** at the 2021 General Assembly at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YgQ9ZrqDCg>

The task before the inaugural Governing Board and the Secretariat of the ISC in 2018 was to give substance to the notion of a truly cross-disciplinary organization that would respond to the contemporary challenges to society and science. This has meant building a truly new organization with new ambitions, a new portfolio of activities and new ways of working. The ISC's first Activity and Achievement Report (2018–2021) provides a concise account of what the Council has accomplished since the founding General Assembly in July 2018 and shows the growth of the Council into its role as the global voice for science.

1 **We have established a dynamic governance system with an active, committed Governing Board** that has convened 14 times during its mandate; four Standing Committees that advise the board on strategy and operations; a Forum of three Patrons who generously advocate for and assist the Council in raising its global profile; an Elections Committee; a Dues Committee; a Small Island Developing States Liaison Committee; a Statutes and Rules of Procedure Working Group; as well as several other working groups that have undertaken important tasks for the Governing Board.

2 **We have developed and implemented a range of strategies, policies and work plans aimed at operationalizing the ISC vision and mission.** In consultation with members the Board produced the Council's first Action Plan (2019–2021), which has served as a strategic guide for the development and delivery of both scientific and organizational priorities, with attention to regional representation and the promotion of diversity and inclusivity, as well as to organizational and environmental sustainability. We were able to respond rapidly and with conviction to external developments such as the murder of George Floyd in 2020, which triggered worldwide reflection on the reality of systemic racism in science, and the COVID-19 pandemic. We have developed the Council's second Action Plan for 2022 to 2024 based on the lessons learned during the first planning and implementation cycle as well as the changing external circumstances.

3 **We have invested in connecting and working much more closely with our members.** We have appointed a new Membership Liaison Officer and run a membership engagement campaign aimed at understanding members' priorities, needs and concerns for the ISC, with more than 80 in-depth member conversations held by June 2021. We have improved information flows with regular and comprehensive updates from the Governing Board and the Secretariat. We have launched and facilitated news- and knowledge-sharing opportunities amongst the membership, drawn members into strategic and scientific activities and consulted extensively to secure members' input, advice and support. We have added 22 new organizations to the ISC family.

4 **We have built an ambitious, relevant and responsive portfolio of scientific activities that address major contemporary global challenges for both science and society.** We currently manage or co-manage a set of 30 projects, with good progress across all but two, which will be taken forward as of 2022. Several high-impact projects are moving into a second phase of action, including those on the future of scientific and scholarly publishing, rethinking human development, strengthening the mandate and influence of science within the UN system and amplifying globally coordinated investment in science-led missions for sustainability. We have drawn on the knowledge, influence and wisdom of more than 200 experts from all parts of the world in steering our projects and programmes. High levels of productivity are exemplified by the volume of outputs that have been generated, including 42 reports, position papers and statements; 33 articles and briefs; 120 blogs and think-pieces; four knowledge portals; over 70 events; and 59 films and podcasts.

5 **We have expanded our science policy and funding networks, developed new action-oriented partnerships and worked to reduce fragmentation of effort at the global level.** We are working with over 70 partner organizations in the implementation of our portfolio of scientific activities. We have developed a multi-year partnership agreement with the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and are about to sign a similar one with the UN Development Programme (UNDP). We continue to work closely with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNESCO and through our COVID-19 Outcome Scenarios project are developing strong relations with the World Health Organization. We have started strengthening our engagement in other multilateral processes via our affiliate bodies, such as INGSA, and through the work of an ISC Special Envoy. Our close collaboration with the InterAcademy Partnership (IAP) has been formalized in a Memorandum of Understanding and we are working towards similar agreements with the World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO) and the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Sciences (CIPSH). We regularly receive requests for the ISC to endorse, sponsor or contribute to international activities led by ISC members, partners and other external organizations.

6 **We have ramped up our communications and outreach capacity, increasing the visibility of the work of the ISC and its members around the world.** We created the position of Communications Director who has led the development of a new digital communication strategy and the production of compelling storytelling based on content created by the Council and its members. We launched Global Science TV in partnership with the Australian Academy of Science and secured new media partners, including BBC Storyworks. We developed a set of ISC language principles and introduced translation possibilities for the website and interpretation for key ISC events.

7 **We have professionalized our management and organizational support functions.** Our Paris headquarters team has not grown since July 2018 but has been strengthened by continued training and skills development as well as the engagement of specific scientific expertise to support targeted, high-profile deliverables. We have developed new project management, and information and knowledge management systems, and are on a steep learning curve towards more effective project monitoring and evaluation processes. We have secured a new five-year grant from the US National Science Foundation and invested ISC reserves in the development of new strategic activities.

8 **We have maintained operational cohesion and increased our levels of productivity despite the disruption of a global pandemic.** The COVID-19 pandemic forced the ISC to stop what it was doing and with some urgency to reflect on its role and competence in addressing the causes and consequences of the crisis. The 2019–2021 Action Plan proved to be a sound underpinning for the Council’s response to the pandemic.

The business of establishing a new organization involves experimentation, review and learning, with multiple feedback loops. The ISC is in a continuous process of evolution and improvement. It has demonstrated both perseverance vis-à-vis long-standing challenges and responsiveness to new developments. The first three years of the ISC have been extraordinarily challenging and rewarding and hopefully have laid a solid foundation for the future.



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Work with the ISC to advance science as a global public good.

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