



Incoming presidential address

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Colleagues

As I said at the members' forum at the start of this week, starting a new organization is always hard. Starting a new organisation on the shoulders of two previous organisations with their own long histories provides further challenges. And ensuring rapid progress on expectations of our members to truly reach our mission for being the global voice for science while at the same time building a new organisation adds challenges rapidly compounded by the arrival of Covid in the need to move to a virtual world. We have had to work in very different ways for the last 20 months - a mode that creates both challenges and opportunities. It is now 3 am in NZ – and perhaps that simple observation says it all about the challenges of managing a global organization through the pandemic. Yet, there has been scarcely a hiccup in the work programme.

Those who took the initial steps some 6 years ago in creating the momentum that led to the merger between the two legacy organizations should be thanked by the entire science community for their insights and efforts. They created the strapline '*the global voice for science*' which underpins our mission statement. More effectively operationalizing that will determine how we set priorities and continue our evolution over the next 3 years

Over its first three years an enormous amount has been achieved by the headquarters team, the board under the insightful leadership of Daya Reddy, its committees, working groups, regional offices and the many members and individuals who have contributed to what has been a remarkable but still incomplete transition.

An overwhelming vote of thanks must be given to Heide Hackmann and the headquarters team. What may not be so obvious to those not involved, has been how complex and time consuming has been the merging of two organisations against a legacy background and in the context of legal complexity. The constitution which was written before the ISC was launched creates some practical difficulties. Other than the most obvious matters, we chose not to deal with these in the first mandate of the board but rather to leave these until the organization matures further. I expect that we will return to the membership to discuss some of these issues in the coming year.

But at the same time we have accelerated the efforts towards our mission of becoming an effective and truly representative global voice for science – the Activity and Achievement Report presented on the first day and the Action Plan both in its initial form, and now in its second edition as you approved 2 days ago, shows much of what we are doing but beyond that there is an enormous amount of representation and relationship building. The pandemic has illustrated how flexible and adaptable we will need to be that effective voice moving ahead.

The Board has helped steer the changes that were expected and indeed were needed. On behalf of all of us I thank Daya for his leadership, wisdom, careful team building and chairmanship. And we have had a board, committees and steering groups that have made enormous contributions on issues ranging from internal management to our relationship to international bodies.

Oman was to host this general assembly until Covid struck. But the Governing Board had already seen the value of a midterm policy-focused meeting and in discussions with the Omani government and Royal Court of Oman we have agreed to host an inaugural meeting with global policy leaders to discuss the science - policy interface on Jan 30 to Feb 3 2023. We see this as the start of a regular 3 yearly mid-term meeting for the Council and hopefully by then we can meet face to face.

The global voice for science are the four key words of our mission statement. If it is to be a valid claim, we must address issues of membership. The membership is built on a heritage of national academies and international disciplinary bodies and social science associations, but the global landscape of science is now so much broader. There are disciplines that are not well represented and indeed the bulk of the world's science community – perhaps 10 million people - are not members of our member organizations. As we discussed on Monday this is an area of high priority to consider and revert.

Further even when individuals are members of our members, I have been surprised how little our work and activities are familiar to the science community. We need to collectively find a way to be fully inclusive for it is only through that inclusivity can we become a strong voice that will be heard. If you wish the ISC to be successful in its mission, we must have your commitment to be much more proactive in reaching through to your members and beyond, so all the scientific community understands what the ISC is doing on their behalf. This lack of awareness is currently our biggest weakness.

I come to the ISC, as a medical scientist whose recent years have been largely spent in a career at the interface between science and policy, science and diplomacy. What that experience has told me is that a voice is meaningless unless there is a person or institution that wants to hear it. That is not necessarily always the case. We need to build our listeners. This means if we want to be a global voice we must put effort into our relationships with the multilateral system - the UN agencies, OECD, WEF and so forth. In that regard, I thank Julia Marton-Lefevre and her working group for an outstanding but challenging report on what the ISC needs to do to be more effective in the multilateral system which will be presented tomorrow.

To progress that agenda will require resources and attention that the current profile and funding cannot provide. Some rebalancing will be needed in our priorities while we look for ways to expand our reach and capacities through the donor community. This itself needs effort. But our membership is another resource, and we must reach out to you, not just to involve you in initiatives or to disseminate our activities but also

to engage you in the critical task of building relationships. But I am also grateful to those members who have given us further in-kind support – for example the Royal Society of NZ provides, with the financial assistance of its government, the bulk of the support for Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in Science

Never has it been so urgent and critical that the voice for science speaks and that it is heard. The positioning of science has been affected in many societies over the last few years - it has been politicised in some places, we have seen a massive increase in active disinformation and multilateralism has been fractured.

Yet it was a global effort by science, both public and private that brought us the Covid vaccines at an unprecedented rate. Unfortunately, the multilateral system has not fully seized the opportunity such cooperation created and sadly vaccine coverage remains poor and unequal with tragic consequences. Our Covid scenarios project is intended to provide policymakers with a toolkit to hopefully make better choices over the years ahead as the pandemic roles on. The long term social, economic, societal and strategic implications cannot be ignored. It leaves permanent fingerprints on the way science operates. It leaves critical lessons for how science must input into policy, how science diplomacy must evolve and how we must address future existential risks.

We all understand that science must be a truly global and inclusive endeavor to address these issues of the global commons - pandemics, climate change, social inclusion and equity, food water and energy security, urbanization, human development, geostrategic fractionation, rapid technological change and much more. At the same time each country has to put these and other challenges into local and specific context.

And central to this is strengthening the relationships between science and policy making, embedding science more deeply in society, promoting progressive change in how the science system must evolve for the changing position of science and expectations in society. ISC will work with its affiliate INGSA and all our members and partners to make an even greater effort in building understandings and capacities at these interfaces.

We should be proud of the start we have already made. We are deeply embedded with the revision of human development by UNDP and on disaster risk reduction with UNDRR. We have worked closely with UNESCO on the issues of open science and our work on the publishing project has been very well received. I would call attention to the position paper recently released on science as a global public good. I would hope that is distributed to all your members and more broadly. I particularly acknowledge the leadership of Geoffrey Boulton in leading these two essential projects

We have a broad range of engagements on the sustainability challenges. In this regard I would highlight the report Unleashing science, delivering missions for sustainability and the related discussions we have led through the Global Forum of Funders and the Global Research Council. The next steps heralded in that report have commenced. We are in the process of establishing a Commission chaired by two distinguished global states persons, Irina Bukova former director general of UNESCO and Ms Helen Clark, former prime minister of NZ and administrator of UNDP and including our patron Ismael Serageldin, distinguished scientists including Johan Rockstrom and Albert Van Jarsveldt, philanthropists, statespersons, funders and sustainability strategists, The brief of the commission is to explore how to implement organize and fund

global science missions for sustainability. We hope to announce the full membership within a few weeks. They have been asked to report to the Global Knowledge Dialogue that ISC will host in Oman from Jan 30 2023 to Feb 3 2023.

And just today the ISC accepted an invitation from World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) to be a partner in the establishment of the Centre of Excellence for Climate and Disaster Resilience.

The nature of science is changing, there remains much to do with respect to inclusivity and diversity, there are areas of scientific activity that merit deep reflection. For example, the emergence of transdisciplinary science is seen as critical to many so-called wicked problems; but how can transdisciplinary science be fairly evaluated, funded, and assessed? How do we exploit our increasingly pluralistic capabilities and embrace all the robust knowledge disciplines from the natural, social, data, and technology AI sciences and the humanities. As we reach globally how does science interact with other knowledge systems?

The need is vast, the gaps and opportunities are rather obvious. But on the current financial base and with a rather constrained membership we cannot fully address our mission without philanthropic support. These are the immediate challenges we face.

I want to congratulate the new board who was elected today - we have a busy, important and exciting three years ahead of us. But I also want to thank those who put their names forward but were not elected. You will be at the front of the queue as we seek help on the many tasks ahead of us.

Collectively all of us - the newly elected board, our headquarters staff, our committees, our regional focal points, our members, and associate members have a critical job to do as we work together to ensure that by giving science a global voice, we can advance the interests of all the planet's citizens while protecting the planet itself. In three years, we cannot do everything we might want to do but by a truly cooperative approach we can make a significant dent in the issues ahead of us.