



## Outgoing presidential address and Closing of the 2<sup>nd</sup> ISC General Assembly

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Dear colleagues: I am grateful for the opportunity to offer some reflections on my time as President.

I'd like to begin at the beginning: with our Statutes, that code that sets out who and what we are, and which governs the manner in which we go about our work. Our Statutes were carefully crafted by our predecessor organizations, with a unified view of science as the lodestar. The Statutes have undergone a few changes, in large part to enable more effective functioning of the Council; but the core remains firmly in place. And there is a good reason why, right up front, we declare not only the vision and mission of the ISC, but significantly, our values, and an explicit declaration of the principle of freedom and responsibility in science.

These core values are the primary guide to everything we do: excellence and professionalism; inclusivity and diversity; transparency and integrity; and innovation and sustainability. It is as well that we return to these time and time again, as a constant reminder of what we are enjoined to uphold.

So where are we now? I shall refrain from a lengthy summary of what we have achieved, and the challenges we have faced – these have been set out in detail in the report considered by this Assembly, and the essence superbly captured by Peter Gluckman, in his incoming President's address. The challenges that the first Governing Board confronted remain, in large part, as we proceed into the period of the second Board, but there is a sense of increased urgency: we are three years closer to the target date for achieving the SDGs, and there is growing alarm, about lack of progress towards staying below the 1.5 degree temperature increase. We witness an amplification of the threats to science posed by misinformation and scientific nationalism, which seek to undermine the core values of science. We cannot be passive in the face of such threats. The ever-increasing work load of our Committee for Freedom and Responsibility in Science in respect of issues of scientific freedom is also a reflection of the times in which we live.

And of course we have had the significant wake-up call of Covid: there have been warnings for some time about the likelihood of pandemics given the continual emergence of new pathogens, and the connectedness and globalised nature of our modern world. The warnings have become reality in the form of Sars-Cov2.

We have also woken up to the need for self-examination, of identifying and responding to discriminatory practices whether in our organizations or in the scientific world at large, once again guided by our values.

I do wish to highlight the importance placed by the outgoing Governing Board on inclusivity. I had emphasized on this in my candidature for the presidency, more than three years ago. And it has been a constantly high priority; perhaps I have harped on this too much at times. But it does go to the heart of what is meant by a global scientific community: one in which there is equality of access to information, the means to benefit from it, and in which serious efforts are directed towards bringing into the fold regions of the world excluded from this collective effort for want of capacity, or a result of being parts of marginalised groups, or simply as a result of being invisible.

I am pleased at the steps that have been taken in this regard by the Governing Board: recognizing the need for building capacity so that all can engage effectively; the work on gender; on recognition of the importance also of generational diversity; and not least, our language policy, so that all may participate and communicate effectively and confidently, whether in our governance bodies or across the range of scientific activities.

I turn to the outgoing Governing Board. We decided at an early stage that the Board would be more than a governance body, a Board in which members were expected to take active roles in our external relationships and programme activities. Many of you have taken this to heart in a very literal way, and have made substantial contributions in leading initiatives, and engaging in extensive research and writing. I have been wonderfully supported by all Board members in all our endeavours. I thank you for that, and for your very substantial contributions to the well-being and success of the Council.

The Secretariat, or HQ, comprises around 25 individuals who have worked hard, have carried a load that really warrants twice their number, and have been creative and resourceful in making the ISC work. I have enjoyed a wonderfully productive and pleasant working relationship with Heide Hackmann, who has been so supportive, and generous with her time and wisdom. HQ is the heart of the ISC, colleagues, the engine room, and we owe our colleagues in the Secretariat a huge vote of thanks for their commitment and dedication to the organization. My remarks and thanks extend to our colleagues in the Regional Offices, who have made major contributions in furthering the objectives of the ISC in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Asia-Pacific region.

ISC Members: it has been a stimulating journey in which I have learned so much about our unions, academies, councils, and working with you. I have appreciated your support, ideas, your commitment to the ISC, the frequent opportunities to be involved in your activities, and have been made to feel **very much at home in your midst. We often hear that “The ISC should do this, or that.” Well, you are the ISC, and I have no doubt that you will maintain your high expectations of the Governing Board, but also provide to it the kind of support that I and this Board have experienced.**

I am sure, members, that you will join me in congratulating once again most warmly the members of the new Board on their election. The ISC is in good shape, has achieved a great deal, and can look forward to a period of tackling existing and new challenges. Peter Gluckman’s grasp of the complexities of the interfaces at which we work: between science, policy and society, combined with his energetic leadership and finely honed skills at engaging at these interfaces – these augur well for

the success of the new Board, to which I extend every good wish as you embark on this journey of promoting science as a global public good.

It has been a singular privilege to have served the ISC in its inaugural three-year period. Members, you have placed a huge amount of trust in me; and for this I thank you. I extend my sincere wishes to the International Science Council for ever greater success in speaking for science, and in ensuring the central place of science in making the world a better place.

Thank you.

In a moment I will close this General Assembly.

So many have worked so very hard to make this General Assembly a success. I start with our team at the Secretariat, led by Heide Hackmann, CEO: really well done. It has been so reassuring to work with **a group of colleagues who know what they're doing, and** going about it in such cheerful fashion. I have been superbly supported during the entire Assembly.

The platform and technical aspects have been provided by Conference Consultancy South Africa. I thank Pieter Swart and his team for your support, complex virtual setting.

We have been entertained by the beautiful music of composer and pianist Christof Spangenberg. Thank you Christof, also for your flexibility and cheerful response to being asked please to entertain us for 10 more minutes while we sorted things out.

I am also grateful to the many Governing Board members who have contributed in various ways towards making the Assembly a success: presentations, leading discussions, moderation, fielding questions. Thank you – much appreciated.

Some Board members, and indeed ISC member delegations, have had to contend with quite inhospitable hours in order to participate. I thank Peter Gluckman for contending with much forbearance with, I was going to say late nights, but really it was more like 3 or 4 in the morning, his time. Thank you all, whether you are based thousands of kilometres to the west or the east of Paris, for being here and participating so fully.

I now formally close the 2nd General Assembly of the International Science Council. We shall **reconvene in three years' time for the 3rd Assembly.**

Thank you and farewell.