



## **Towards a future regional presence for the ISC**

### **An ISC strategy**

*September 2020*

#### **1. Background**

With the merger of the International Council for Science (ICSU) and the International Social Science Council (ISSC), and formation of the International Science Council (ISC) in July 2018, ICSU Regional Offices in Africa (ROA), Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) and in Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) automatically became Regional Offices of the ISC. At the same time the self-organized European group of ICSU members expanded its membership to include all European members of the ISC.

In its first year of office, the ISC's Governing Board (GB) gave priority to the development of concrete plans aimed at operationalizing the new Council's ambitious vision and mission. This resulted in the publication of the [ISC 2019 – 2021 Action Plan](#). Chapter 6 of the Action Plan outlines a high-level vision and related actions for securing a strengthened regional presence for the Council, building on the valuable experiences and support networks of existing Regional Offices.

As articulated in the Action Plan, the vision for a future regional presence for the ISC was one of a single, global ISC Secretariat, with Headquarters (HQ) in Paris and Branches that are directly accountable to HQ located in different parts of the world. The ambition was to transition to regional branches by January 2022 and, in the case of existing Regional Offices, after conclusion of their support and hosting agreements. In addition, the Action Plan announced the Council's intention to establish a presence in the Middle East and amongst the Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

A number of important developments related to the ISC's regional plans have occurred since the publication of the Action Plan in September 2019. They include:

- An agreement by the South Africa Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) and the Academy of Sciences of South Africa to extend support and hosting arrangements for the ISC's Regional Office for Africa (ROA) by one year, until the end of March 2021.
- The closure of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) at the end of December 2019, following a unilateral decision of the government of El Salvador.
- A series of virtual consultations on the regional question with ISC members from Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, co-organized by the ISC HQ and facilitated by ISC GB members.
- Further strategic discussion at the GB level, leading to a revised regional strategy as set out in this document.
- With regard to the expansion of the ISC's presence in other parts of the world, the ISC has recently established a SIDS Liaison Committee, which will work remotely. In addition, informal exploratory discussions have been held about opportunities to establish an ISC presence in the Middle East; to date no further action has been taken in this regard.



## 2. Introduction to the strategy

This document sets out a strategy for establishing and supporting future ISC regional secretariat structures. While it takes, as a starting point, the ideas and ambitions expressed in the ISC's current Action Plan, these have been reviewed in response to recent developments as outlined above and in light of further strategic considerations presented below.

### ***Strategic considerations***

In its discussions, the GB has considered the anticipated impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on science and science funding systems, on support for international scientific cooperation and, by implication, on the ISC itself. At the same time, it has noted new opportunities for the organization, based on new, remote working and virtual convening arrangements.

In this context, the GB recognizes the imperative of ensuring that future regional structures are not only financially viable and sustainable, but that they bring added-value and practical relevance to the regions and to the ISC as a whole. The overarching goal must be to further strengthen the global voice for science – a voice that, as demonstrated by the current global crisis, is needed more than ever before – by ensuring that it represents the needs and interests of scientific communities in all parts of the world.

### ***A pragmatic approach***

The strategy presented in this document is intended as a baseline for the establishment and further development, over time, of effective new ISC regional structures. In developing it, the GB has assumed that:

- As long as certain boundary conditions are met, there need not be a one-size-fits all model; the size and composition, as well as associated support and accountability arrangements of regional structures can vary from one region to another. Accordingly – and as set out in section 6 below – the GB has agreed on two basic operational models for future regional structures: a branch model and a champion model.
- The GB remains flexible about the exact operationalization of either model. In other words, the more detailed description of hosting requirements provided in section 6 below are indicative of what the GB would regard as essential parameters.
- The development of new regional structures could follow a phased approach, leading to a growth in activities and associated support structures over time and on the basis of available resources.
- The GB does not exclude the possibility that members in a particular region may prefer to join forces in supporting an ISC regional structure; expressions of interest from regional or sub-regional consortia of members would be welcome.

## 3. The purpose and value of regional structures

The ISC works to address issues that are deemed to be of major importance to global science and global societies. To have maximum impact, the ISC's global strategies and associated action plans must have strong resonance in all regions of the world.

Accordingly, the primary purpose of having regional structures is to strengthen the global voice for science. This means that regional structures must serve to increase the ISC's global reach and its global relevance. They must ensure that regional needs and priorities are adequately represented in the ISC's global agenda, that regional voices are actively engaged in the governance and management of the



ISC's work, and that regions benefit from the results of that work. Regional structures must, in other words, support and promote the effective integration of regional and global communities and capacities that comprise the ISC family.

For those organizations willing to host an ISC regional structures, the added value of doing so lies in harnessing the opportunities associated with direct institutional engagement in the ISC's continued development, including exposure to its wider networks of influence in the global science and policy landscape.

#### **4. Main functions of regional structures**

Ideally, regional structures would support the following set of functions:

##### ***a) Widen the ISC community***

- Increase the ISC's membership base in the region
- Ensure strong representation and participation of regional scientists and/or scientific institutions in the ISC's member unions and associations
- Increase the ISC's network of partners in the region

##### ***b) Mobilize active and continuous regional engagement with the ISC***

- Organize and coordinate the involvement of ISC members in the region in the ISC's global strategy development and action planning processes
- Mobilize the participation of ISC members in the region in ISC global activities, including ISC co-sponsored programmes and other affiliated bodies

##### ***c) Amplify ISC representation, communications and outreach at the regional level***

- Promote the outcomes of the ISC's global activities amongst regional scientific and stakeholder communities
- Ensure effective ISC representation in events and fora of ISC members, partners and related stakeholder communities in the region

##### ***d) Contribute to leading the integrated operations of the ISC secretariat***

- Lead on managing specific ISC global science or communications projects, as well as the Council's engagement in regional UN policy processes
- Contribute support to ISC governance bodies and related strategic/action planning processes
- Contribute to the planning and organization of ISC global events, including General Assemblies
- Contribute to ISC fundraising efforts and organizational development projects

##### ***e) Develop regionally-specific priority activities***

In addition to the functions outlined above, ISC regional structures may identify priorities and develop related activities that are not part of the ISC's global action plan priorities but that serve the specific needs and interests of ISC members, partners and/or stakeholder communities in the region. Such regionally-specific agendas and actions would be dependent on resource availability (external funding and/or in-kind support of ISC members in the region) and subject to ISC project development and management principles and procedures.

Given strategic considerations about the financial viability and sustainability of regional structures, as well as the need to adopt a pragmatic approach to their development (section 2 above), the ISC



recognizes that it may not be possible for new regional structures to successfully undertake all the functions described here.

## 5. Key constituencies at the regional level

In undertaking the functions outlined above, regional structures will engage with a wide range of actors. In broad terms they include:

### ***Beneficiaries***

- ISC national members who are based in each of the defined regions; including national academies and research councils, as well as regional councils and associations of national scientific bodies.
- ISC member unions and associations who may not be physically headquartered in the regions but who include in their membership scientific representation from the regions; some have outreach programmes that are region-specific (often concentrating on low- and middle-income countries) and which could benefit through association with regional structures.
- ISC co-sponsored international programmes and other affiliated bodies who have (or seek to have) strong regional engagement in their work.
- The ISC as a whole, including its Paris-based Headquarters.

### ***Collaborators***

- Those national organizations that provide financial or in-kind support to regional structures.
- National and/or regional organizations (such as regional IAP networks) that partner with regional structures on the delivery of regional activities.
- National, regional or global organizations (including UN bodies) that serve as customers, requesting specific engagement with and/or services from the regional structure.

***Competitors*** include other regional scientific bodies that are not ISC members, but that have similar objectives to ISC regional structures and that may share members with the Council. Actors in this should, ideally, become ISC collaborators.

## 6. Operational models: Regional Branches and Regional Champions

The GB has agreed on two models for the organization and functioning of regional structures:

- **The regional branch model:** ISC branches are organizational entities that are hosted by a national organization in the region. They are led by a salaried ISC Director and they seek to undertake all the functions foreseen for ISC regional structures, as described in section 4 above.
- **The regional champion model:** ISC champions are senior scientists who are based in or affiliated with an ISC member organization and who agree to develop, on a voluntary basis and in collaboration with other members in the region, an essential ISC regional presence, focusing primarily on functions related to expanding the ISC membership base, mobilizing members' engagement with the ISC and supporting the Council's outreach (points 4 a) to c) above).

Specifications of each model, including flexibility in operational arrangements, are set out in further detail below. It is important to note that:



- In principle, it should be possible, in any region, for the champion model to develop, over time and in close consultation with the ISC GB, into a branch model.
- Regardless of the model, the ISC's objective is to have in place regional structures that operate as integral parts of the Council's global governance, management and operational arrangements.
- Both models will depend on the financial and/or in-kind contributions of national hosting organizations (ISC members and/or others). The ISC's annual financial contribution to regional structures will be the same across all regions, and should ideally be used to support regional branch or champion activities.
- The ISC aims to secure hosting agreements for a period of at least three and, preferably, five years at a time, with renewal dependent on evaluation processes to be led by the ISC GB.
- Regional structures must be accessible in terms of international transport and must provide unimpeded access for international scientific visitors attending meetings.

## a) Regional branch model

- **Staffing and accountability arrangements**
  - An ISC branch will be led by a dedicated person with the necessary seniority to function at the level of an ISC Director. The incumbent will be a member of the HQ's Executive Leadership Team. He/she will either be seconded or newly appointed by the host organization; in either case, the choice of candidate will require the agreement of the ISC CEO to whom the Director will be accountable.
  - The branch Director will be supported by a dedicated complement of staff, which would ideally include a Science Officer, a Communications Officer and an Administrative Officer. They will be seconded or appointed in agreement with the Director and be accountable to him/her.
  - In the case of all branch staff – Directors and others – part-time engagements may be considered.
  - The host organization would be expected to provide all possible assistance in securing appropriate residential and working papers for international staff appointed. All branch staff would be appointed by the host institution in accordance with national labour laws.
  - Performance assessment and contract renewal of the branch Director would be the subject of joint consultation among the ISC and the host organization.
- **Governance arrangements**
  - A branch will convene a small group of advisors (up to 8), who will serve as a resource to the Director. The group will include an ISC GB member (from the region), and ISC member representatives who will be appointed by the ISC GB on the basis of member suggestions/nominations. The group will conduct its work remotely; physical meetings would be self-funded. Meetings of the group of advisors will be prepared and facilitated by the Branch Director.
  - Like other Directors, the branch Director will submit activity reports to and attend ISC GB meetings.
  - All financial activities of the ISC branch would be subject to the host organization's internal rules and regulations.



- **Functions**

In principle, a branch would undertake all the functions outlined in section 4 above. If full-time staffing cannot be secured, functions will be prioritized in agreement with the ISC GB and the branch host.

- **Resourcing**

A branch will be hosted by a national organization (an ISC member or other), which will provide financial and in-kind support, including:

- Staff salaries or time (in the case of secondments)
- Offices and infrastructural (including IT) support
- Financial management services (note that the host organization would, within and as part of its own accounting system, be expected to maintain separate records of all income and expenditure for the ISC branch as governed by national law and conditions set by the relevant funding organizations)

Branch activities will be supported through:

- An annual financial contribution from the ISC
- If possible, additional funding from the host organization
- External fundraising
- In-kind contributions from other ISC members in the region

## b) Regional champion model

- **Staffing and accountability arrangements**

- A regional champion will serve in this capacity on a voluntary basis and in agreement with the ISC GB
- The ISC member organization they are part of will provide in-house, part-time communications and administrative back-up
- In addition, the regional champion will liaise closely with the ISC CEO and Directors

- **Governance arrangements**

- A regional champion will convene and chair a regional liaison committee, which will include an ISC GB member (from the region), and senior representatives of other ISC members in the region. The group will conduct its work remotely; physical meetings would be self-funded.
- A regional champion will submit activity reports to and attend ISC GB meetings.
- All financial activities of the ISC champion would be subject to the host organization's internal rules and regulations.

- **Functions**

Regional champions will work with members of regional liaison committees on expanding the ISC membership base, mobilizing members' engagement with the ISC and supporting the Council's outreach (points 4 a) to c) above). In addition, they may seek to develop regionally-specific priority activities (point 4 e) above)

- **Resourcing**

A regional champion will be hosted by a national organization (an ISC member or other), which will provide in-kind support, including:

- Communications and administrative back-up



- Office space and infrastructural, including IT support
- Financial management services (note that the host organization would, within and as part of its own accounting system, be expected to maintain separate records of all income and expenditure for the ISC branch as governed by national law and conditions set by the relevant funding organizations)

Activities developed by the regional champion and liaison committee will be supported through:

- An annual financial contribution from the ISC, which could be used, in part, to secure, on a contract basis, the services of a Science Officer
- If possible, additional funding from the host organization
- In-kind contributions from other ISC members in the region
- External fundraising

## 7. Implementation plan

### ***By mid-October 2020***

The ISC will issue a call for Expressions of Interest, initially inviting ISC members based in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as Asia and the Pacific to indicate their interest in hosting either an ISC branch or an ISC champion, and to specify their capacity to support such a structure.

### ***Before July 2021***

The GB will announce the outcomes of the process per region, giving priority to securing new arrangements in Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean by early 2021 and, in the case of Asia and the Pacific by mid-2021. Outcomes will be based on assessment of all expressions of interest received and, as necessary, bilateral discussion with relevant bidders regarding essential requirements, as well as legal conditions. Those discussions will be led by the ISC GB Officers, including the ISC CEO and supported by the ISC Operations Director.

### ***By January 2022***

The launch of new regional structures will be negotiated on a case by case basis. In the case of Africa and Asia and the Pacific, new structures will not be launched before the conclusion of existing hosting agreements. In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, the aim is to launch a regional structure as soon as possible following the conclusion of the bidding process.