

Letter from the ISC President on the Strategic Framework and the Implementation Plan

10 JULY 2025

Dear ISC Members,

I am delighted to share with you a revised draft of the strategic framework and the outline of plans for implementation. They represent maturation of the ISC as an effective body since it was formed in 2018. The plans are the result of a lengthy process of development over several years together with ISC Members, but are complicated by the very fragile situation for science in many places and for international scientific cooperation. This creates a need to give reactive priority to immediate issues affecting international science.

The process to date has had multiple elements. In May 2022 after the period of disruption because of COVID-19, the ISC Governing Board agreed on taking a high-level approach rather than providing a detailed action plan, which had proved constraining. It was followed by extensive Board discussion later in the year leading to a '[theory of change](#)' which was shared with Members in May 2023. Overlapping with this there was, through extensive discussions with ISC Members, a review of the statutes, which included (in revised Statute 6) exemplification of the core mission and goals of the ISC.

Over the past 12 months there has been an extensive round of discussion with Members on strategic priorities and on the framework itself. The strategic framework was the subject of further endorsement in Oman with some caveats expressed relating to a desire for greater specificity. Already, the context in which we operate is very different for international science and science cooperation than we perceived in January. This led to the commentary on our priorities in the [letter from the President-Elect and me dated April 8](#).

There are two balances to find: the balance of what is desirable to do with available resources; and the balance of needs created within the science system alongside those of science's engagement with global policy issues. Different Members inevitably have differing expectations and priorities. From the outset of our planning, there has been the recognition that the ISC has a limited budget and cannot do everything, and that we must focus on the core roles as defined in the statutes. We must prioritise activities where the ISC has a unique role and where we can make a real difference or contribution, and we must stay within our capacities and budget.

The ISC relies on three sources of funding – Members' dues, additional contributions by some generous Members or their governments, and grants or contracts from foundations or funders. In these uncertain times the Governing Board and management are being conservative in managing the budget and this

does affect our scope of activity. Core to an emerging fundraising strategy is to identify what we can do with current resources and what we would like to do but awaits external funding.

But the reality is that with a very fluid and complex landscape we are having to continually review priorities to pragmatically respond to opportunities for and threats to science as they emerge.

The implementation plan must be seen in that light – it is a mix of actions of variable priority but responds to the request in Oman that greater specificity, focus and measurement of performance was desirable. No-one disagrees with that desire, but given the unstable context, there will always be a mix of strategic and operational judgement on how we use optimally our resources.

The ISC Governing Board would welcome any final feedback as we work to improve the global voice for science.



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