

Press release

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International Council for Science expresses grave concern over visa policies and vetting practices for scientists visiting the USA

The ICSU President, Goverdhan Mehta suffers a hostile reception when applying for a visa to attend a scientific meeting in the USA

Paris, France: Officers from the International Council for Science (ICSU) express their grave concern at the hostile treatment which the ICSU President, Goverdhan Mehta received when he applied for a routine visa for the USA at the US Consulate in Chennai, India on 9 February. This incident, during which Professor Mehta – a distinguished chemist - was accused of hiding information relevant to chemical warfare, has been extensively covered by the media in India and in major scientific journals. It clearly illustrates that, despite some progress, all is far from well with regards to the visa policies and associated practices for scientists wishing to enter the USA.

The ICSU Officers, who met in Paris on 21 February, issued the following statement:

“ICSU was created 75 years ago to facilitate the exchange of scientists and ensure that science contributes to a better world for all of us. We do not expect that scientists be exempt from legitimate concerns relating to national security but we do believe that science has a key role to play in overcoming those concerns and propagating common understanding between countries. Non-discrimination and equity are the essential elements of the Principle of the Universality of Science, which is a founding principle of ICSU, to which all our Members, representing over one hundred countries and thousands of scientists across the world, are committed. Respect for this Principle and for individual scientists is, we believe, a normal expectation in any democratic society. The USA has always been a very strong supporter (and beneficiary) of ICSU and we hope that this will be demonstrated in the future not only in its policies but also its practices as regards the free exchange of scientists.”

Founded in 1931, the International Council for Science (ICSU) is a non-governmental organization representing a global membership that includes both national scientific bodies (104 members) and international scientific unions (29 members).

Through this international network, ICSU coordinates interdisciplinary research to address major issues of relevance to both science and society. In addition, the Council actively advocates for freedom in the conduct of science, promotes equitable access to scientific data and information, and facilitates science education and capacity building.

Contact: Prof. Thomas Rosswall, Executive Director, or Dr Carthage Smith, Deputy Director
Phone: +33 (0) 1 45 25 03 29 Email: carthage@icsu.org

See also: http://www.icsu.org/5_abouticsu/INTRO_UnivSci_1.html for further information on the Principle of the Universality of Science