



ICSU STATEMENT ON FREEDOM IN THE CONDUCT OF SCIENCE

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The International Council for Science (ICSU) is the oldest existing non-governmental body committed to international scientific co-operation for the benefit of humanity. Created in 1931 when its predecessor, the International Research Council, was dissolved because of discrimination against scientists from certain countries, ICSU has consistently and vigorously pursued a policy of non-discrimination. ICSU maintains that discrimination hinders the free communication and exchange of ideas and information among scientists and thereby impedes scientific progress, which is dependent on their collective efforts.

ICSU's Members are 26 International Scientific Unions and 98 national academies of science or research councils. Together these organizations set up international mechanisms to carry out scientific programmes of an interdisciplinary nature which are concerned with issues such as protection of the environment, research in Antarctic regions or space research. An important factor in the success of these activities is that they are carried out under the aegis of such a respected independent and international scientific body as ICSU. Each of the International Scientific Unions, the National Scientific members, ICSU interdisciplinary bodies, and Scientific Associates - the organizations comprising the ICSU family - strictly adheres to the basic principles of the Council's Statutes when involved in activities carried out within the scope of ICSU's concern.

One of the basic principles in these Statutes is that of the universality of science (see Statute 5), which affirms the right and freedom of scientists to associate in international scientific activity without regard to such factors as citizenship, religion, creed, political stance, ethnic origin, race, colour, language, age or sex. Such rights are embodied in a variety of articles in the International Bill of Human Rights*.

ICSU seeks to protect and promote awareness of the rights and fundamental freedoms of scientists in their scientific pursuits. ICSU has a well-established non-political tradition which is central to its character and operations, and it does not permit any of its activities to be disturbed by statements or actions of a political nature.

As the intrinsic nature of science is universal, its success depends on co-operation, interaction and exchange, often beyond national boundaries. Therefore, ICSU strongly supports the principle that scientists must have free access to each other and to scientific data and information. It is only through such access that international scientific co-operation flourishes and science thus progresses.

On these grounds, ICSU works to resolve such cases as do, nevertheless, arise from time to time when such open access is denied or restricted and in cases primarily involving members of the ICSU family. In most cases, private consultations involving members of the ICSU family have been successful. Where private consultations have failed, ICSU has publicized acts of discrimination against scientists and taken steps to prevent their repetition, including, if necessary, such measures as encouraging members of the ICSU family to decline invitations to hold or attend meetings in the country concerned.

On the basis of its firm and unwavering commitment to the principle of the universality of science, ICSU reaffirms its opposition to any actions which weaken or undermine this principle.

** The International Bill of Human Rights includes three documents: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966).*

Note: The name of the Council was changed from the International Council of Scientific Unions to the International Council for Science at an Extraordinary General Assembly held in 1998. The acronym, "ICSU", was retained.