



Meeting of Officers

Paris
6-7 February 2012

REPORT

Present: David Black, Yuan Tseh Lee, Malegapuru W. Makgoba, Gordon McBean, Hans Rudolf Ott (by telephone for Agenda item 8) and Sergio Pastrana

Apologies for absence: Catherine Bréchnignac

In attendance: Tish Bahmani Fard, Peter Bates (Agenda item 6 only), Gisbert Glaser (Agenda item 6 only), Roberta Quadrelli (Agenda item 6 only), Carthage Smith and Steven Wilson

1. Welcome and Opening of the Meeting

The Officers and staff briefly introduced themselves and the President welcomed the incoming Executive Director, Steven Wilson, who would take up his duties on 1 April.

The Officers noted that the aim of the meeting was to familiarize themselves with the short and medium-term issues facing ICSU. In that context, the Officers' meeting would prepare particular items for decision by the Executive Board, *e.g.* fund-raising.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The Agenda was adopted with the addition of one item under 12 Any Other Business (12.2 Secretariat Update).

The Officers were informed that, as was the usual custom for ICSU governance meetings, the report of the meeting would not be *verbatim* and only the key issues and actions would be recorded.

3. Discussion on past, present and future of ICSU

A PowerPoint presentation was given on the history of ICSU, its current activities and the future for ICSU. The Officers noted that potential threats for ICSU were the risk of marginalization given the other players on the international science scene and the increasing competition for funding and the need to speak with one voice for both the Union and National Members of ICSU. Therefore ICSU needed to be proactive in initiating activities and bringing together its members, particularly the Unions, and in improving its visibility to the broad community of scientists and national and international institutions, notably through the use of more sophisticated communications technologies. Intimidating or confusing language such as “integrating social sciences”

or “trans-, multi-, inter-disciplinary” should be avoided. The need to involve the engineering and medical sciences was again stressed. Energy, water, education and linking with the business community were highlighted as areas where, despite previous efforts, ICSU had not yet been successful in finding a unique role to play.

A list of key meetings organized by, or in which ICSU was involved, and who would be attending from ICSU for the period February to July 2012 was considered by the Officers. They were informed that a corporate presentation was available and a new one was planned which could be specifically tailored for presentation to each meeting. It was requested that this list of meetings be made regularly available to the Board.

Action

Provide updated list of meetings to each EB meeting (Tish Bahmani Fard).

4. Statutes and Rules of Procedure

The Officers noted that the Statutes and Rules of Procedure needed updating in several respects and that they should be considered in detail. This should be carried out within the framework of the review of ICSU. However, certain matters needed immediate consideration.

4.1. Role of Officers

The Rules of Procedure concerning the Vice-President for External Relations and the Secretary-General needed to be addressed in particular. A portfolio of responsibilities could be assigned to the Vice-President according to each incumbent’s particular interests. Broadly, these responsibilities could be defined as fund-raising, relations with partners and developing new partnerships, communication, and visibility of ICSU. A report on the activities undertaken by the Vice-President should be made to each Executive Board. The Vice-President for External Relations and the Deputy Executive Director were asked to present a paper on this to the next meeting of the Board.

The responsibilities assigned to the Secretary-General needed to be updated since these predated the position of Executive Director.

Action

Ensure review of Statutes and Rules of Procedure as part of review of ICSU (Carthage Smith).

Prepare briefing on responsibilities of Vice-President for External Relations for next EB (Sergio Pastrana and Carthage Smith).

4.2 Consultation and Decision-making

It was agreed that a document needed to be drafted outlining the different decision-making responsibilities of the various ICSU bodies, notably the Executive Board and the Policy Committees.

Action

Prepare briefing on decision-making responsibilities and remit of EB; CSPR, and CFRS for next EB (Tish Bahmani Fard).

5. Strategic Plan 2012-2017

The Officers were updated on the activities proposed in the Strategic Plan for implementation in the period 2012-2017.

It was noted that there should be an open call for nominations to committees and that the appointment process needed to be refined. It was important that the EB should not be, nor perceived to be, simply rubber-stamping CSPR recommendations.

6. Introduction/update key ongoing projects

6.1 Future Earth

The Officers were briefed on the Future Earth initiative which had been declared an Interdisciplinary Body of ICSU by the last General Assembly. It was agreed that ICSU should be vigilant in ensuring that it continue to play a decisive and visible role (e.g. in the logo) in this very big and important project which, although ICSU's own initiative, would go far beyond the ICSU community. The specific structure of the initiative (an alliance of independent global organizations) was stressed, as was the importance of ensuring continued major funding, in addition to that from the Belmont Forum. This would require the establishment of global scientific programmes, the involvement of the Regional Offices and the global community. The ability of the project to do this would be an important measure of its success. The Officers noted that Future Earth would continue to receive extended administrative support from ICSU until an International Programme Office (IPO) was established and felt that it was important to ensure gradual progress in building the programme in order to have a solid base.

6.2 Rio+20

The Officers were given a presentation on ICSU's involvement and activities in relation to RIO+20 and noted the importance of ensuring that the statement from the ICSU science forum, being organized just prior to the Rio+20 meeting, was delivered to the intergovernmental meeting, which over 100 heads of state were expected to attend. Some concern was expressed that some of the joint funders of the science forum would not now be able to participate financially and whether there would be sufficient participants in the science forum meeting. Concern was also expressed regarding whether preparations for the forum (speakers, *etc.*) were sufficiently advanced, and whether the ICSU messages for Rio+20 were sufficiently honed to be effective.

7. Regional Offices

7.1 SIDA funding

The Officers noted that the grant from SIDA, if received, would need a good coordinator and would be mainly intended for the Regional Offices and that these would need assistance in the administration of the grant. The grant should be used by the Offices in the funding of projects and not be seen by them to be used to award grants of their own. Such a grant from a development agency would be a good first for ICSU and could lead to others. There was no standard overhead charge on such grants but in the case of SIDA this would be 10%. The Regional Offices were attractive to funding agencies and enabled ICSU to reach many scientists that it would not otherwise be able to.

It was noted that some of the Regional Offices had become dependent on one liaison officer in the ICSU Paris Secretariat and that an alternative would be to develop direct liaison with the relevant Science Office for the different projects. It was hoped that increased use would be made of virtual participation in Regional Committee meetings by various Science Officers at ICSU and that the yearly meeting of the Officers with the Regional Chairs, Directors and EB liaisons would increase the functioning of the Regional Offices of ICSU as “one” whole. In addition, any Members of the Board present in the region were encouraged to interact with the Regional Offices wherever appropriate. The incoming Executive Director intended to visit all of the Offices as soon as possible.

It was stressed that, although problems had been encountered, the overall outcome and achievements since the start of the Regional Offices was very positive.

Continued attempts to establish a Middle East and North Africa office (MENA) were noted but the current situation in the region made it preferable that these be put on hold for the time-being.

<p>Action</p>

<p>Ensure further consideration of the SIDA grant by the EB (Carthage Smith).</p>

8. Fund-raising

Hans Ott joined the meeting by telephone. He informed the Board that the question of fund-raising and the legal aspects of this would be discussed by the Committee on Finance at its meeting immediately prior to the Board meeting in April.

The Officers were given a presentation on the legal aspects of fund-raising and the nature of the funds that ICSU could establish (endowment, foundation, etc.). At the moment, ICSU could only receive major funding for earmarked projects but it had applied for recognition under French law as an organization of “public usefulness” (*utilité publique*) and this would widen the possibilities. Although the legal issues should be left to the Committee on Finance, the Officers needed to advise the Executive Board on the strategy for fund-raising: for what activities were the funds being sought, which areas of ICSU’s portfolio, who were acceptable donors, should patrons be sought, and so on. The amount it was hoped to raise also needed to be fixed as this would affect the approach to be taken. It was noted that the administrative time spent on small grants was disproportional to the money received and that therefore a minimum platform should be set for the amount of funding to be sought. Flexibility in the use of the funds was also an important issue.

The final composition of the Fund-raising Committee needed to be decided and whether or not a professional fund-raiser should be employed, although it was recognized that this could be expensive. It was agreed that additional members with expertise in fund-raising needed to be added to the Committee which could then flesh out a strategy for ICSU in this area, and that the Officers should be prepared to suggest names to the Board at its meeting in April. Until the strategy was decided, the form that fund-raising would take and the degree of involvement of the Secretariat and the senior management could not be established.

Action

Suggest additional persons with fund-raising experience for Fund-raising Committee to EB (Officers).

9. Visibility of ICSU and Communications**9.1 Internal, including Officers, Executive Board and CSPR**

The problem of communications between, and visibility of, the various ICSU committees and bodies (EB, CSPR, CFRS) was discussed. Joint meetings of these bodies were too big to be viable and although the Secretariat played an important role in communication between them, it was important that the Secretariat should not be seen as controlling them. However, three Officers of ICSU attend the CSPR meetings and the Chair of the CFRS should be invited to report to one EB meeting per year.

9.2 External

Various possibilities for raising visibility were discussed: an ICSU prize, a special lecture, Future Earth, communications with journalists and a more interactive website. There are presently many scientists around the world who participate in, for example, the global environmental change programs but are unaware that ICSU is the sponsor or co-sponsor. ICSU should also work with the Unions and National Members to increase our joint visibility. It was agreed that these should be explored with the new Science Communications Officer, when appointed.

The Officers considered a proposal from a Scientific Associate of ICSU, 4S, for an International Science and Technology Film Festival. They were broadly supportive of the idea but felt this needed more elaboration before it could be put to the EB

Action

Inform 4S of Officers' discussion (Carthage Smith).

10. External Review of ICSU

The Officers felt that the Executive Board should draw up the Terms of Reference for the External Review and these should be sent to the members of ICSU for approval. Prior to this it might be useful to consult all Members on issues that they consider to be of highest priority for the review. A call could also be sent to members for offers to host and manage the Review. The target should be to start the review early in 2013.

A Selection Committee should be set up to select the members of the panel for the External Review and choose the review secretariat. The members of the SC should be eminent persons well versed in ICSU but who would not be suitable to serve on the Panel itself, for example, former Presidents. The membership of the Panel should be widened to include users of ICSU sponsored science.

Action

Finalize the review procedure and timetable at the next EB meeting.

11. Dates and Places of Next Meetings, including Officers and Regional Chairs and Directors Meetings

The Officers noted that the CSPR would meet at the end of September at the earliest and that, therefore, the Board could not meet before late October/November. The first day of the meeting would be a joint meeting of the Officers and Regional Chairs, Directors and EB Liaisons with the Committee on Finance meeting in parallel, and would be followed by two days of EB meeting. The Regional Chairs and Directors could also have a one day meeting with staff. Proposed dates for the meetings were:

12-13-14 November - preferred

19-20-21 November

26-27-28 November

The list of meetings, when definitive, should be made available in the Member Zone.

Action

Ask Ordinary Members of Board, Regional Chairs and Directors their availability for the meeting in November (Tish Bahmani Fard).

12. Any Other Business

12.1 Unions and Interdisciplinary Bodies (IBs) meetings

The Officers considered ICSU representation at forthcoming Union and Interdisciplinary Bodies' Assemblies and Congresses and made some modifications to this. They noted that a Member of the EB was not always the most appropriate representative.

12.2 Secretariat Update

The Officers noted that the position of Science Communications Officer had been vacant since June and that the Science and Information Technology Officer, Mustapha Mokrane, would be leaving ICSU in mid-February to take up a position as Director of the ICSU World Data System in Tokyo. It was hoped that both these positions would be filled shortly. In addition, two persons had been hired to help mainly with Future Earth: Saskia Heijltjes to work on the website and Anne-Sophie Stevance as an Assistant Science Officer. Both these positions were for 18 months. A consultant, Julie DeMeester, had also been engaged for a six month period renewable to work on Future Earth. Despite this the Secretariat was still under-resourced with regard to core staff and it had been necessary to establish priorities as to what could be done.

The Officers expressed their thanks to staff for all their efforts to accomplish the work under very difficult conditions.

13. Evaluation of Meeting

The Officers felt that the meeting had been useful and productive, mainly due to a minimum of paperwork being provided and a limited but adequate number of PowerPoint presentations. There was no pressure to make decisions, thus leaving room for real discussion.

The Officers discussed whether or not staff should be present at Officers and EB meetings and agreed that, in order that their discussions could be open and frank, staff, other than the Directors, should only attend for those items for which they were responsible.

14. Closed Session

14.1 Without Executive Directors

There being no other business, the President closed the meeting at 17:15.

Annex 1 List of Follow-up Actions