

**20th Meeting of the
Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in the conduct of Science CFRS**

Hotel Radisson Paraíso Perisur
28-29 April 2016
Mexico City

Meeting Report

Present Leiv K. Sydnes (Chair), Ranjini Bandyopadhyay, David Black (*ex officio*), Richard Bourgeois-Doyle, Merry Bullock, Guéladio Cissé, Roberta D’Alessandro, Kumie Inose, Gaven Martin, Alberto J. Núñez Sellés, Silke Schicktanz, Valérie Schini-Kerth, Mark Thorley

Absent Hasan Dweik, Eric Odada, Lucilla Spini

ICSU Secretariat Rohini Rao (Administrative Officer), Roger Pfister (CFRS Executive Secretary)

1 Welcoming remarks and introduction

The Chair welcomed the Committee members and thanked the Mexican Academy of Sciences for their hospitality and excellent arrangements for the Committee meeting and the workshop on “Gender issues in field research: mobility and internationalization of science”, which was held in the Academy on April 27th.

Members were reminded about the confidential nature of the meeting documents, and ICSU’s policy for conflict-of-interest. No conflict-of-interest was reported.

2 Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes, but items 10 and 11 were taken before item 3. Six items were included in Item 12 Any other business.

Decision

To adopt the agenda.

3 19th CFRS meeting: report and implementation

The report had been approved electronically and been posted on the web. Those decisions not implemented were considered under the appropriate agenda items at this meeting.

Decision

To note the report and the follow-up actions.

4 ICSU Strategic Plan (2018-23)

The ICSU Executive Board (EB) and Committee on Scientific Planning and Review (CSPR) have initiated the drafting of a Strategic Plan for 2018-23. CFRS has been invited to provide input into this process. After a thorough discussion, based on the current strategic plan, the report from the external review panel and the response to this report by ICSU, the Committee identified six topics which are particularly important to address and highlight in the new strategic plan: Research Integrity, Assessment, Open Access and Data, Education, Gender, and Mobility and internationalization.

Decision

To recommend to include Research Integrity, Assessment, Open Access and Data, Education, Gender, and Mobility and internationalization among ICSU's central themes in the Strategic Plan for 2018-23.

5 Publications on research integrity in the conduct of science

On the basis of two recent publications, the briefing paper "Research integrity: what it means, why it is important and how we might protect it" from Science European, and the book "Doing global science: A guide to responsible conduct in the global scientific enterprise" from Inter-Academy Partnership (IAP), both interesting and the latter already posted on the CFRS site, the discussion focused on the importance of making the ICSU website a focal point for information about documents, literature, and events pertaining to research integrity. Close cooperation with the Communication department will be crucial to achieve this. It was also agreed to recommend that ICSU EB works for a closer cooperation with IAP on research-integrity issues.

Decision

To work to improve the CFRS part of the ICSU website with regard to contents and layout;
To recommend to ICSU EB to improve the cooperation with IAP on research-integrity issues.

6 Scientific publication ethics

The latest developments in the controversy between a primatologist from Sri Lanka and the Editor-in-Chief of an international scientific journal were discussed. The Committee observed with satisfaction that the long-lasting case has been resolved and that CFRS's involvement had facilitated such an outcome. The Committee also noted how difficult such individual cases are, and that earlier involvement of COPE probably would have led to a smoother and less stressful process. No further action is needed.

Decision

To note the resolution of the case with no further actions required.

7 Freedom and responsibility in science: generic issues (updates & new ones)

7.1 Boycott calls against the Israeli science community

Since the last Committee meeting, calls to boycott Israel have appeared in the scientific community in the UK and the US. Initiatives within the American Anthropological Association (AAA) were particularly prolific and the Chair wrote to AAA to convey the Committee's stance based on the Principle of

Universality of Science (ICSU Statute 5) and request that AAA reconsidered its position on this issue. The same message was communicated to the International Union for Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES), an ICSU Union Member and therefore obliged to adhere to ICSU Statute 5. The receipt of both letters has been acknowledged, but no stand against boycott was expressed.

AAA is now in the middle of a vote about boycott of Israel. On the association's website (<http://www.americananthro.org>) there is no mention of the letter from CFRS and its request to take a stand against boycott on the basis of the Principle of Universality of Science. By not informing the membership about the CFRS intervention, the Committee felt that an important piece of information was missing. The Committee therefore decided that the Chair should send another letter, with the CFRS position paper on boycott attached, to AAA and the groups within AAA campaigning actively for Yes and No to boycott.

Decision

To follow up with a letter from the Chair to AAA and the groups within AAA campaigning actively for Yes and No to boycott.

7.2 Scientific policy advice: L'Aquila and CFRS Advisory Note "Science Communication"

The Committee noted with satisfaction that the six scientists charged with manslaughter after the earthquake in L'Aquila, Italy, in April 2009, were acquitted of all charges by the Supreme court in November 2015. With the learning outcome from this case as a backdrop the Committee finalized the revision of the Advisory Note on Scientific Communication on the basis of a draft document prepared by a task group of committee members. The document will be sent to the EB for approval and subsequent posting on the ICSU website.

Decision

To note the final verdict on the L'Aquila case;
To send the revised Advisory Note on "Science Communication" to the EB for approval and subsequent posting on the ICSU website.

7.3 Ban on teaching political science at Uzbek higher education institutions

Media had reported that the Government of Uzbekistan had banned the teaching of political science at the country's universities. The Chair wrote to the Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences (UAS) to get their assessment of the situation, but no reply has been received. It was decided to send another letter to UAS, possibly through a different channel to be identified by M Bullock.

Decision

To send a new letter to the Academy, if possible via an alternative channel.

7.4 Western textbooks in university libraries in China

Information discussed at the previous CFRS meeting revealed that higher education institutions in China were removing textbooks of Western origin from their libraries. However, to what extent this was the case was not clear, and the Chair wrote to former and current Chinese members of ICSU committees and asked for their assessment. On the basis of their feedback the Committee concluded that the reported removal was not the result of a national policy, but a consequence of decisions taken at a few universities. The case was therefore put at rest.

Decision

To note that some Chinese universities do not want to use Western literature in education and research;
To put the case to rest.

7.5 Joint action with the InterAcademy Partnership to protect scientists' human rights

An update was given on the cases of health professionals in Bahrain. It was noted that repeated contacts with IAP, the Global Network of Science Academies, about joint efforts to defend the human rights of scientists have not been productive so far. Considering the on-going process of merging IAP, the Global Network of Science Academies, with the InterAcademy Medical Panel (IAMP) and the InterAcademy Council (IAC) to form the InterAcademy Partnership (IAP) the Committee decided to renew the request in due course.

Decision

To renew the request to IAP to cooperate on relevant human-rights issues for scientists.

7.6 Vetting of scientific publications in Russia

An update was given on an article in *Nature* which suggested that scientists at universities and other research institutions in Russia were required to get approval before disseminating the results of scientific research. Since no response had been received to the letter the Chair have written to the Russian Academy of Science asking for their assessment of the situation, the committee felt a proper basis for any follow-up was missing. The committee decided to continue to follow the development and act as appropriate in the future.

Decision

To follow the case and act as appropriate in the future.

7.7 Pressures on members of the Turkish scientific community

ICSU was among some 20 organisations that in January endorsed a public letter in response to the recent developments in Turkey. The Committee was briefed on the process that led to ICSU's endorsement of the letter written by Scholars at Risk to the President of Turkey and the Turkish Government calling for a stop of the massacres in the country and the release of the more than 1000 academics that has been arrested.

A response from the Turkish Minister of National Education on 3 March to Scholars at Risk was shared with all other signatory organisations for information. Even after having studied the letter, the Committee is very concerned about the situation in Turkey and will follow the development closely.

The letter was posted on the ICSU website January 25th, but the Committee maintained that a more visible location than at the Freedom and Responsibility Portal would have been appropriate considering the importance of the case. A policy for posting of statements from CFRS and other ICSU bodies on the web should be discussed by the EB.

Decision

To continue to follow the developments in Turkey closely;

To catalyse a discussion about the ICSU web policy.

8 Freedom of science: individual cases (updates and new ones)

8.1 Omid Kokabee, Iran

The Chair's contact with Iranian representatives about the Kokabee case has not given any tangible results so far. Considering Kokabee's recent deteriorating health, it was decided to contact the Iranian authorities again in writing.

It was also observed that the team appointed to draft guidelines for scholars intending to work in Iran and other countries with a record of breaching the Principle of Universality of Science (Bullock, Cissé, D'Alessandro, Inose, Martin, Schick Tanz and Schini-Kerth) had barely started. A request to have a draft ready for the next meeting was accepted.

Decision

To write again to the Iranian authorities about the Kokabee case;
To draft guidelines for scholars doing research in countries known to violate the Principle of Universality of Science.

8.2 Büşra Ersanlı, Turkey

Ersanlı's case is followed closely and an up-date was given by the Chair. The process moves slowly forward. The next court appearance is scheduled for May 17th. Future actions will depend on the outcome of this hearing.

Decision

To note the Chair's update and continue to follow the case.

8.3 Bahá'í community leaders, Iran

The case is followed closely and an update of the case was given. There are still six scientists in prison of the group the Committee considered in 2012. In January this year, the International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies published that the prison sentences for four of the scientists were reduced from 20 to 10 years due to a change in the national legislation. The release of Fariba Kamalabadi, Mahvash Sabet, Vahid Tizfahm and Saeid Rezaie is therefore scheduled for May 2018.

The Network further provided information on the arrest, during February 2016, of a couple of the Bahá'í faith teaching at the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE).

The Committee took note of the update, but decided to take no specific actions at this point in time.

Decision

To note the Chair's update and continue to follow the case.

9 Conferences and workshops

9.1 Workshop “Gender issues in field research” (Mexico, April 2016)

A workshop entitled “Gender issues in field research: mobility and internationalization of science” took place on April 27th at the Mexican Academy of Sciences. The event was organized by CFRS, the Mexican Academy of Sciences (MAS) and the ICSU Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC). A special report about the workshop is under preparation and will be published on the CFRS section of the ICSU website. During the workshop the first draft of an Advisory Note on the conference topic was prepared. The document will be circulated among the Committee members for feedback so that the document can be finalized at the next meeting and subsequently be posted on the ICSU homepage

The Chair thanked the Mexican Academy of Sciences for their generous hosting, and the organizing committee for a job well done.

Decision

To finalize a report about the workshop and post it on the ICSU website;
To continue the work with the Advisory Note so that a document is ready for finalization at the next meeting.

9.2 5th World Conference on Research Integrity (Amsterdam, May 2017)

After an introduction by the Chair and a presentation of the latest development by R D’Alessandro, the Committee discussed the issue at length. During the discussion it became clear that any contribution from CFRS would fail to meet ICSU’s objectives within the scope of the conference. It also became clear that other emerging opportunities appear to be more suitable to promote issues of research integrity among the broader scientific community. Consequently, the Committee decided to withdraw any official involvement from the 5th WCRI. As a result, Roberta D’Alessandro will no longer be an ICSU representative on the conference organizing committee, but she would still continue to participate in the planning of the conference in a personal capacity.

D Black updated the Committee about ‘Science International’, which is a series of approximately annual meetings that will bring together the leadership of ICSU, ISSC, TWAS and IAP in order to address key challenges in the international policy-for-science arena. This triggered a lot of interest in the Committee and some key issues that could potentially fall under Science International for 2017 were identified. It was agreed that D Black should contact H Hackmann and the EB as soon as possible to pass on the interest expressed by the Committee. This discussion led to an agreement i) to focus on issues that could fall under Science International and ii) to inform the Chair of the WCRI Organising Committee by mail that CFRS will withdraw from the WCRI Conference.

Based on the theme of Research Integrity, two broad and related topics were identified as suitable subjects for Science International:

1. Integrity in the use of metrics for assessment, evaluation and construction of excellence;
2. Reproducibility and the responsible use of data

These topics, which are being looked into by a subgroup of the Committee, could each sustain a suitable program, but equally could be combined into one, with a selection of particular aspects. Furthermore, there could be a beneficial flow-on from the first Science International topic on big data. It could be possible to paraphrase the two topics as “How administrators use data” and “How scientists use data.” CFRS and CODATA could link in providing members for a working group. An alternative scenario might be to provide this kind of serious input within the context of major world science events such as the World Science Forum.

Decision

To inform the conference chair about the decision to withdraw CFRS's involvement from the 5th WCRI;
To inform the ICSU EB and Secretariat about the interest from CFRS to propose topics for Science International in 2017.

9.3 Future CFRS workshops

The four topics listed in the agenda papers were all discussed. The first three are all related to the free access, quality, reproducibility and responsible use of data. Aspects of these topics would provide excellent material for a Science International meeting, as indicated under item 9.2.

The fourth potential workshop topic "Shaping the future of researchers in developing countries; enabling environment and resources, halting brain drain and enhancing the value of basic research" could be focused on Africa and in that context, possibly be linked through the Regional Office for Africa (ROA) with the African capacity-building program, which is now funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). D Black was tasked to pass these suggestions on to H Hackmann for consideration in upcoming discussions.

Decision

To follow further discussions with other parties, relating to the development of a possible CFRS workshop linked to the SIDA program.

10 CFRS Secretariat

The Chair gave an update on his visit to the ICSU Secretariat on 20 April to discuss hosting arrangements. The Royal Society of New Zealand has verbally agreed to host the CFRS Secretariat for a period of three years, but as part of the commitment involves government support, the formal proposal document is awaiting the signature of the relevant minister. In the meantime, any dealings related to the CFRS Secretariat will be the responsibility of ICSU Paris and Rohini Rao will continue to be the contact person.

This being the last meeting of Roger Pfister as Executive Secretary for CFRS, the chair thanked Roger for his dedicated work over the years.

The Chair also informed about continuing discussions to explore a merger of ICSU and ISSC, as such a merger would possibly cause structural and organisational changes. He also indicated that consideration is being given to a suggestion that the Vice President of ICSU for External Relations should be the Chair of CFRS. This could lead to enhanced cohesion between the CFRS and the EB. Consideration is also being given to the viability of holding only one physical meeting of CFRS per year, coupled with the introduction of an electronic meeting. Further developments of these issues will be presented for discussion at the October CFRS meeting.

Decision

To note the developments.

11 Future CFRS meetings

The next meeting of CFRS will be held at the ICSU Secretariat in Paris on 6-7 October 2016. Since the agenda at this meeting will be more elaborate than at past October meetings, the members should be prepared to stay over until Saturday.

Decision

To note that the next CFRS meeting in 2016 will take place in Paris, France, on 6-7 October.

12 Any other business

12.1 Defence Trade Controls Act 2012, Australia

In November 2012 the Defence Trade Controls Act (DTCA) received Royal Assent. This Act puts in place measures to control dual-use technologies of potential strategic and military importance. CFRS has at a previous meeting (May 2013) expressed concern that the Act may violate the freedom of science as described in the Principle of Universality of Science, and this concern was in July 2013 conveyed in a letter to the then Chief Scientist of Australia, Professor Ian Chubb. In his reply Professor Chubb pointed out that the Act included a 24-month transition period, during which a steering group would consider the effects of the controls on research, innovation, international collaboration and trade.

That transition period is now over, and April 2nd this year DCTA came into force. This has generated headlines like “Defence Takes Control over Australian Research” in the Australasian Science (www.australasianscience.com.au/-/article/issue-april-2016/defence-takes-control-over-australian-research.htm) about the impact of the Act on Australian research. This caught the Committee’s attention, and thorough discussions revealed that there was considerable concern about the accusations that the DTCA might restrict the freedom of Australian scientists in carrying out their work. If these accusations are correct, the Principle of the Universality of Science would be violated. The Committee therefore decided to write to the new Chief Scientist of Australia, Dr. Alan Finkel, and request his comments and advice about this matter for future consideration.

Decision

To write to the Chief Scientist of Australia to request comments about recent reactions to DCTA from the scientific community.

12.2 Israeli Occupation of Al Quds University campus

A recent article on the website of Al Quds University in Jerusalem (www.alquds.edu/en) reports about occupation of the university campus by Israeli forces for the third time this academic year. If the contents of the article are correct, the incident is a clear violation of the Principle of Universality of Science. After a thorough discussion it was decided to send a letter to the Israel Academy of Sciences to ask for their assessment of what happened before further actions are considered.

Decision

To write to the Israel Academy of Science and ask for their assessment of what happened at Al Quds University in April this year.

12.3 History on trial

This item is related to recent reports, *e.g.* at www.ekathimarini.com and en.protothema.gr, about Professor Heinz Richter, University of Mannheim, Germany, who was charged with racism under Article 2 in a Greek law adopted in 2014. The Committee concluded that if the charges were upheld, they would represent a clear breach of the Principle of Universality of Science. However, it was announced during the meeting that all charges against Professor Richter have been dropped by a Greek court. On this basis the Committee decided to post a news item about the case on the ICSU website as soon as possible.

Decision

To write a news item on the Richter case for posting at the ICSU website.

12.4 Educational material about the Principle of Universality of Science

It can be regarded as a fact that the Principle of Universality of Science is not well enough known in the scientific community. Based on this background it was proposed that adequate educational material should be developed to present the principle and its consequences for university students. It was agreed to look into the matter. The Chair will come up with a proposal for discussion at the next meeting.

Decision

To start to develop educational material about the Principle of Universality of Science.

12.5 Expert Group Meeting on emerging issues related to GSDR 2016

The meeting took place at the UN Headquarters in New York, USA, 5-7 April and two members of the Committee participated (G Crissé, R D’Alessandrio) and gave a brief summary. The main objective with the meeting was to engage the scientific community in identification of emerging issues that could be included in the next Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR 2016) for consideration by policy makers. The theme chosen for the next report is “Ensuring that no one is left behind”, and the discussion focused on definitions, criteria, approaches and methodologies for identifying the range of issues to be considered as “emerging” and how to understandably present them to policymakers. Two issues were particularly highlighted:

- How to reduce the “time lag” between scientific evidence and policy action?
- How to ensure awareness and appropriate action at country and local levels?

Decision

To note the report given by the two participants.

12.6 Killing of an Italian PhD student in Egypt

Giulio Regeni, an Italian student pursuing a PhD at Cambridge University, UK, died in tragic circumstances when he was doing fieldwork in Egypt in January this year. He was found dead in a ditch outside Cairo with signs that he had been tortured. In addition to being a terrible murder case, this is a clear violation of the Principle of Universality of Science and has gained significant international attention. It illustrates clearly what risks researchers doing fieldwork can run into in regions that are unstable, and the case was indeed relevant for the workshop held the day before this Committee met (see item 9.1)

During the discussion that followed after the presentation of the facts, the Committee focused on what can be learnt from the case. An issue which has received little attention so far, is what sort of advice and briefing the student received from the university before leaving for Egypt. The Committee felt that the answer to this question will be very valuable to know to prevent similar incidents in the future. The need for clear guidelines for these sorts of projects involving students was also underlined. On the basis of the discussion the Committee concluded that a first step would be to send a request to Cambridge University to get information about the advice and guidance Giulio Regeni received before he travelled to Egypt to start the fieldwork.

Decision

To write to University of Cambridge to get information about how Giulio Regeni was prepared for his fieldwork.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 13:00 hrs.