

**6th Meeting of the ICSU
Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in the conduct of Science (CFRS)**

ICSU Secretariat, Paris,
18 & 19 May 2009

Meeting Report

Present:, Najia Ariguib, Ruth Arnon, Carol Corillon, Bengt Gustafsson (Chairman), Sylvia Rumball, Peter Mahaffy, Peter Schindler, Maurice Tchuente (*ex officio*) Ovid Tzeng, David Vaux, Moises Wasserman, Kan Zhang

ICSU Secretariat: Carthage Smith (*ex officio*)

Apologies for absence: Peter Anyang ‘Nyong ‘O and John Sulston

1. Welcoming remarks

The Chairman welcomed members to the final meeting of the committee with its current membership. It was noted that several members would be rotating off. Maurice Tchuente, the new ICSU Secretary General, an *ex officio* member of CFRS, was introduced to the committee.

2. Adoption of agenda

Decision

To adopt the agenda

3. Minutes of the previous CFRS meeting and matters arising

Item 3 History of SCFCS/Principle of Universality

The desirability of producing a history and analysis of ICSU’s activities in relation to the freedom of scientists had been discussed at previous CFRS meetings. Peter Schindler, who had acted as Secretary for the predecessor of CFRS – the Standing Committee on Freedom in the Conduct of Science (SCFCS) – was about to rotate off CFRS. It was agreed that it was important to capture these past experiences before the corporate memory had been lost.

Item 4.2 World Conference on Research Integrity

Carthage Smith reported on a meeting on Research Integrity that had been organised by the European Science Foundation in Madrid in November, 2008. This had

focussed mainly on the interests and actions of European countries but included many of the stakeholders who had been instrumental in organising the first World Conference on Research Integrity. It was noted that a second World Conference was now being organised in Singapore in 2010 and members stressed the importance of CFRS involvement in this event.

Item 5 Statement on Israel Palestine conflict

It was noted that the statement on scientific freedom and responsibility and the Israel-Palestine conflict, which had been approved in Maputo, was now published and posted on the ICSU website. However, it had not yet been submitted to the Executive Board for approval. This was also the case for the statement on publication practices and indices and the role of peer review in research assessment (July, 2008) and the statement on promoting the integrity of science and the scientific record (September, 2008).

Item 6 Scientists in Contemporary Wars

This topic had been on the committee's agenda since its first meeting and the Chair had prepared a background paper which had gone through several iterations. The chair reported that recent discussions with academic colleagues had identified a number of critical gaps and that a more systematic review of current knowledge was really required. This might then form the basis for an interesting workshop.

The discussion was extended to include a number of potential situations where scientists might be involved in practices that infringed human rights, including, for example, the role of psychologists in interrogating suspected terrorists. It was recognised that many scientists were probably unaware of international human rights agreements and raising awareness and stimulating debate was an appropriate role for CFRS.

Item 7 Research Collections

Carthage Smith reported on the OECD-Global Science Forum meeting in London in March on research collections. This involved primarily Natural History Museums and, although the topic was important, it was not obvious what the added value of ICSU involvement might be.

Decision

To invite Peter Schindler to prepare a 1 page summary of the SCFCS archive and a longer (~10k word) analysis based on the minutes of SCFCS meetings;
to explore the feasibility of posting the SCFCS minutes or annual reports on the web;
to request the secretariat to contact ESF and emphasise the committee's interest in a second World Conference on Research Integrity;
to submit the three CFRS statements to the Executive Board for consideration at its next meeting;
to use the work thus far on scientists in contemporary wars as the basis for a more systematic review of the subject, which might then feed into a workshop (action Bengt Gustafsson);
to draft a statement on science and human rights for consideration at the next CFRS meeting (action: Carol Corillon, Bengt Gustafsson, Sylvia Rumball, Carthage Smith);

to continue to monitor the international activities on harmonisation of research collections.

4. Discussion of the Work-plan and prioritisation

The CFRS workplan, 2009-2011, had been agreed at the previous meeting and subsequently endorsed by the ICSU General Assembly. The committee was now asked to prioritise the agreed actions. It was noted that secretarial support was a limiting factor. A general invitation to ICSU Members to consider hosting a secretariat had not generated any positive responses, although some very preliminary and informal discussions suggested that there might be some interest in Switzerland.

Raising the visibility and outreach of the committee was considered to be a major priority. It was agreed that one way of stimulating Member interest would be to use the website more creatively and that there was considerable potential in this regard. Committee members often send articles and reports on various 'hot topics' to the Secretariat and these could be posted on a 'blog' with an invitation to CFRS and ICSU members to comment. Electronic tools could also facilitate committee work between meetings.

The committee was charged with re-drafting the Principle of Universality and this could be tied to an international marketing campaign to raise awareness of this Principle.

Decision

To request the Secretariat to follow-up on the potential interest of Switzerland in providing support for CFRS;
to request Peter Mahaffy to open up a 'google group' for CFRS;
to ensure that the development of the ICSU web-site incorporates an interactive 'blog' on which committee members could post issues for consultation with the broader ICSU membership.

5. Update on support for workshops

5.1 Proposed workshop on the private sector-academia interface

Following on from the discussion at the previous meeting, the Chair presented a well-developed proposal for a workshop on Private Sector-Academia Interactions. It was proposed that this take place in Sweden in late 2010 (or possibly early in 2011) with support from the Swedish academies of science and engineering and the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise. A funding application had been prepared for submission to Swedish Foundations.

It was reaffirmed that this was an important and interesting topic of high relevance to CFRS. The discussion raised a broad range of possible issues for inclusion. It was agreed that the main focus should be on freedom and responsibility and that the selection of specific topics should reflect this.

5.2 Other expressions of interest from Members

Several other ICSU National Members had expressed an interest in sponsoring and/or co-organising a CFRS workshop as follows:

Topic	W.shop date	Proposer
Converging Technologies	Late 2009	Pugwash (Taipei)
Private sector-academia interactions	Late 2010/early 2011	Sweden
Science and policy advice or science and the media	Late 2010	Columbia
Science and policy advice	2010 or 2011	Denmark
Access to data, information and research materials	After 2010	USA
Science in contemporary Wars	2012	Sweden
Science and Religion	?	Norway
????	?	China: Beijing
ICTs and biology or the knowledge divide	?	China: Taipei

CFRS members were positively impressed by Members enthusiasm. Because of the workload for the Committee and secretariat it was initially agreed that only one workshop per year should be co-sponsored. However, in subsequent discussion (including immediately after the meeting) it was agreed that all offers should be accepted, with some events eventually having less input from CFRS, where appropriate.

It was also noted that the Society for the Social Studies of Science (4S), which had joined as an Associate member of ICSU at the Maputo General Assembly, had expressed an interest in supporting participants from the social sciences to attend CFRS workshops.

Decision

To invite the chair to establish a scientific organising committee for the workshop on the private sector-academia interface that would include some or all of the following: Ruth Arnon, Sylvia Rumball, John Sulston and Ovid Tzeng, as appropriate; to thank all ICSU Members expressing an interest in hosting a CFRS workshop and to encourage them to develop their plans further; to request the secretariat to contact Pugwash and explore the possibility of holding the previously cancelled workshop on converging technologies in Taipei.

6. Revising Statute 5: the Principle of Universality

Members were reminded of the discussions that had taken place in earlier meetings to produce revised wording for ICSU Statute 5, the Principle of Universality, so that it more explicitly incorporated scientific responsibilities. In the event, the Executive Board had advised that it was premature to propose a revision at the 29th General Assembly in Maputo but invited CFRS to develop new wording to be presented to the GA in 2011. It was clarified that a first revised draft would need to go to the Executive Board in April 2010 before being sent out to all ICSU Members for comment.

Decision

To agree that Peter Mahaffey would take the lead, together with Ovid Tzeng and Sylvia Rumball, in developing revised wording for statute 5 for consideration at the next CFRS meeting.

7. Science publication issues7.1 Plagiarism and the Peter Lawrence case

David Vaux introduced this case, which had been highlighted in The Scientist on-line. Peter Lawrence, a developmental biologist from the UK, had raised concerns about a recent publication in Cell by Jeffrey Axelrod from the USA. He claimed that the Cell paper was largely a rehash of his own group's work that was published in 2004 and was not properly accredited. The associated on-line blog hosted by The Scientist revealed many similar such cases of misrepresentation and miss-accreditation of findings.

In discussion, it was noted that informal on-line blogs and social networking amongst scientists were an increasingly popular and effective way for exposing such issues. It was agreed that CFRS should contribute in this area – an ICSU-CFRS blog should have considerable credibility with the scientific community.

7.2 Possible journal bias against authors from developing countries

Najia Ariguib presented the case for bias or prejudice against authors from developing countries based on her own experience. She had recently had a paper rejected by an editor, despite generally positive reviews from the peer reviewers. Whilst it was difficult to extrapolate from this one case, anecdotal evidence suggested that this was a common experience for authors from developing countries (and from less prestigious Institutions). With its global membership, ICSU was well-placed to shed some light on this issue.

7.3 Merck published fake journal

David Vaux presented the recent case of a 'fake journal', i.e. a journal posing as a peer-reviewed medical journal that actually published non-reviewed articles. The Australasian Journal of Bone and Joint Medicine was published by Elsevier and sponsored by the pharmaceutical company Merck. It included several articles whose results were favourable to the company's products and it appeared to be essentially a marketing tool for the company. Merck's sponsorship was undisclosed.

It was agreed that this was another topic on which the awareness of the scientific community was limited and about which an ICSU web blog could usefully stimulate more open discussion.

Decision

To communicate to Peter Lawrence that his case had been considered by the committee as an illustration of a more generic issue of concern to science;

To consult the ICSU membership on its experiences with regards to journal bias/prejudice against authors from developing countries.

8. Iranian scientists and Europe

8.1 The Netherlands

Concern had been raised at the previous meeting about new legislation in the Netherlands that banned Iranian students from participating in certain higher education courses. The Chairman had written to the Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences in July 2008 to encourage appropriate action to ensure withdrawal of the legislation. The Academy subsequently wrote to the Ministry of Education Culture and Science, citing the Principle of Universality. It now appeared that the legislation would be amended .

8.2 France

An article appeared in the journal *Nature* in December 2008 highlighting problems for Iranian scientists wishing to work in France. *Nature* identified more than a dozen Iranian scientists who had either been refused visas or never received responses to visa applications. The ICSU Deputy Executive Director, Carthage Smith, was interviewed for the article and expressed his concern at discrimination based solely on nationality.

At the time of the article, there had been informal discussions with CNRS, which was cited in the article, but no formal written communication had been exchanged. It was now agreed that, given the apparent gravity of the situation, a letter should be sent to the relevant French Authorities.

Decisions

To write to the relevant French authorities to express concern at the delays and refusals of visas for students and scientists from Iran.

9. Letter to Members, re visas to the USA

Concerns had been raised in February by the China Association for Science and Technology, an ICSU National Member, because several Chinese scientists were unable to obtain visas for a visit to the USA. The ICSU secretariat had contacted the US National Academy of Sciences for assistance and they in turn had been in touch with the State Department. However, it turned out that the applications for visas had been submitted too late for them to be processed. In the light of this case, Carthage Smith had written to all ICSU Members notifying them that applications for entry visas to the USA for nationals of certain countries, including China, India and Russia, should be submitted a minimum of three months prior to the desired entry date. Several Members had responded that they were grateful for this notification.

Decision

To post the letter to Members on the ICSU website

10. Statement on Universality of Science and the International Polar Year

The International Polar Year, 2007-2008 was a major international research programme that had been launched by ICSU in collaboration with WMO. Now that it was coming to an end, attention was turning to the legacy of the programme and a number of issues related to the Principle of Universality had come to the fore. These included access to data, information and research materials and preservation of equitable access to the Arctic itself for scientific research. CFRS members were asked for initial inputs to a proposed ICSU position statement on this topic.

It was noted that the current outline statement focussed mainly on the Arctic and needed to be extended to incorporate the Antarctic, which in many ways was a good example of Universality. The statement should include reference to scientific responsibilities as well as maintenance of freedoms or rights. In this regard, IPY was a good illustration of how science could address major societal challenges and engage and inform the public.

Decision

To agree that CFRS should provide input on future drafts of the statement

11. Turkey and Darwin

In March, it was reported in the scientific and mainstream press that the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) had censored the publication of a cover story on Darwin and evolution in one of the country's leading science journals. The publication's editor-in-chief had apparently been fired as a result of the incident. The UK Royal Society had written to the Turkish Academy of Sciences to express its grave concern about this incident and the Academy had subsequently issued a statement calling for free and independent understanding of science.

In addition to the general concern about suppression of the theory of evolution for ideological reasons, members expressed their concerns over the reported treatment of the journal editor. TUBITAK was an ICSU National Member and it was incumbent on ICSU to contact TUBITAK and express its grave concern as about this matter and ask for clarification of events. The positive statement from the Turkish Academy should be cited in this communication.

Decision

To request the Secretariat to formally communicate the CFRS's concerns to the ICSU National Member in Turkey – TUBITAK.

12. Relations with the AAAS coalition

It had been noted at the previous CFRS meeting that the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) was launching a broad based effort to mobilise scientific organisations and scientists in the service of human rights through science. The AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition was launched in Washington in January at a meeting that brought together representatives of 50, mainly US-focused, scientific organisations. Carol Corillon attended this meeting and reported on it to CFRS members.

It was agreed that this was an ambitious and very worthy initiative with which CFRS should maintain contact. However, it was probably not appropriate for CFRS to become a member of the coalition under the auspices of AAAS. Rather, a more strategic approach, potentially including partnership on specific projects, e.g. workshops, was a more attractive option.

Decision

To not join the coalition at this stage; and,
Carthage Smith to meet with Mona Younis (AAAS coalition coordinator) during his next visit to Washington.

13. Widespread persecution of scholars

The Institute of International Education (IIE) and UNESCO had recently published a global study of the persecution of scholars. This was based on ~850 cases of individuals who had received support from IIE's Scholar Rescue Fund in 2002-2007. The cases came from 101 countries but were concentrated primarily in conflict areas and countries with low *per capita* income. The report called for a UN Convention to protect scholars from harassment, imprisonment and violence.

The cases detailed in the report encompassed a wide range of issues and reinforced the need for a case by case approach when dealing with science and human rights abuses. However, the cumulative message was that scholars were a high risk group in many different contexts and a new UN Convention could potentially help confer greater protection.

Decision

To request the CFRS chair to contact the report's author, Brendan O'Malley, to further explore the feasibility of a new UN Convention; and,
to raise the issue of a new convention with UNESCO (re. item 15.6).

14. Individual cases

Past cases

14.1 Binyak Sen

An up-date was given on the case of Binyak Sen, the jailed Indian paediatrician and human rights worker. He was still imprisoned and his medial condition had deteriorated. He was being denied access to the hospital of his choice and had refused to accept treatment at a designated state hospital in the State of Chhattisgarh.

[In the days following the CFRS meeting Dr Sen was granted unconditional bail by the Supreme Court of India and released for prison. However, the State Government continued to insist that it would pursue the prosecution.]

New cases

14.2 Ali Talizibi (Iran/Brazil)

Ali Talizibili was an Iranian mathematician, working in Brazil, who had been offered a post in France for a year but was unable to obtain a visa. This was one of the cases that might be referred to in the letter to the French Government (item 8.2).

14.3 Arash Alaei and Kamiar Alaei (Iran)

The Alaei brothers were Iranian doctors working on HIV/AIDS. They had been arrested in June 2008 and convicted for “cooperating with an enemy government” and sentenced to 3-6 years imprisonment. Their lawyer was planning an appeal on the basis that no credible evidence against them had been presented in the court case.

The exact history and scientific status of the brothers was unclear as were some of the details regarding their prosecution. Nevertheless, one interpretation was that they had been incarcerated solely for collaborating with international medical colleagues.

14.4 Nithaya Chetty (S Africa)

Professor Nithaya Chetty, a highly respected physicist, had resigned from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in November 2008, following internal disciplinary action. He and a colleague had published comments in the press and on the University’s listserv that were critical of the University’s vice chancellor. The V-C was accused of blocking discussion of a document on academic freedom that was critical of the University’s “prevailing culture of incivility and racial stereotyping”.

This was considered to be largely an internal disciplinary issue and as Professor Chetty had apparently been offered positions at a number of South African institutions, it was not considered to be a case that merited intervention from CFRS.

14.5 Terrones brothers (Mexico)

In July 2008 an article in the journal Nature highlighted the situation of Humberto and Mauricio Terrones at the Potosi Institute for Science and Technology in Mexico. The brothers alleged that they were being harassed by the Institute’s authorities, who wished to close down their laboratory. A number of eminent international scientists had taken up their case, which had attracted considerable publicity.

CFRS members considered that this was largely an internal institutional issue that should be dealt with by the relevant Mexican authorities.

Having considered these cases, there was a general discussion of the type of cases on which it was appropriate for CFRS to intervene. On visa issues CFRS interventions were quite straightforward and could be based on past experience. For other issues affecting scientific freedoms and responsibilities it was less clear but some minimum criteria could be considered. For example, the committee should not normally intervene in employee-employer disputes or cases that could be most appropriately dealt with by local or national authorities.

Decision

to write to the Indian Prime Minister, appealing for the case against Binyak Sen to be dropped on humanitarian grounds, with a copy of the letter to be sent to the Indian National Member of ICSU;
to write to the ICSU National Member in Tehran, asking for clarification of the circumstances surrounding the prosecution of the Alaei brothers;
to take no action with regards to the cases of Nithaya Chetty or the Terrones brothers;
to develop draft criteria for the types of cases that are appropriate for CFRS to consider, for discussion at the next meeting (Action: Carthage Smith and Carol Corillon)

15. Meetings of interest

15.1 World Congress for Freedom of Scientific Research, March 2009

This Congress had taken place at the European Parliament in Brussels in March and the secretariat had been notified of it just before it took place. CFRS was not represented at the meeting. It was sponsored by the European Commission and supported by a number of European foundations and networks. A notable feature was the bringing together of academics and policy-makers to discuss a diversity of topical issues, ranging from stem cells to science and secularism.

15.2 European Association of Science Editors (EASE), September, 2009

As reported at the previous CFRS meeting, EASE was planning a conference on Integrity in Science Communication (Pisa, Italy, September, 2009) and had invited ICSU-CFRS to be represented. David Vaux informed members that he had now accepted an invitation to speak, with ICSU paying part of his expenses.

15.3 Meeting of the International Human Rights Network, Rabat, May 21-23

This Network meeting was to take place in Morocco shortly after the present CFRS meeting. Several issues that were also on the CFRS agenda would be discussed and it was noted that both Carol Corillon, the Network's Executive Director, and Bengt Gustafsson would attend.

15.4 AAAS Annual Conference

Carthage Smith informed members that he had been invited to participate in a session on challenges of scientific collaboration across borders, which was being organised as part of the AAAS annual conference, 2010. The conference was scheduled to take place in San Diego, USA on 18-22 February.

Members considered this to be an important opportunity to raise the profile of CFRS.

15.5 Symposium on Science, Ethics and Development

Peter Mahaffey notified members that the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) would be including a Symposium on Science Ethics and Development at its congress in Glasgow (Scotland) in August.

The committee considered that this was the type of event that other ICSU Unions should be encouraged to include in their congresses.

15.5 All European Academies (ALLEA) meeting

The Chairman informed members that he would be participating in an ALLEA meeting on developing a 'European Code of Conduct, re Research Integrity'

15.6 UNESCO-COMEST meeting, Kuala Lumpur, June 16-19, 2009

The work of the UNESCO World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST) was presented at the first meeting of CFRS in 2006. At this stage it was agreed that links should be maintained with COMEST. ICSU continued to be invited to attend COMEST meetings and, when these took place in Paris, Carthage Smith attended if possible. An invitation had now been received to the next meeting in Kuala Lumpur.

Sylvia Rumball had previously been a member of the UNESCO Bioethics Committee and, as she was familiar with the organisation, it was agreed that she was a good person to represent CFRS at COMEST. At the same time, it would be an opportunity for her to establish links with the ICSU Regional Office in Kuala Lumpur. It was also agreed that the secretariat should continue discussions with the UNESCO Ethics Division to identify areas of common interest. It might be appropriate to reciprocate the invitation by COMEST and invite the Director of the Ethics Division to attend CFRS meetings.

It was agreed that these events provided ideal opportunities to publicise and distribute the CFRS booklet on Freedom, Responsibility and Universality of Science.

Decision

To request the secretariat to make contact with the organisers of the World Congress for Freedom of Scientific Research and notify them of CFRS activities;
to note that David Vaux will represent CFRS at the EASE conference;
to discuss the work of CFRs at the International Human Rights Network's meeting;
Carthage Smith to accept the invitation to participate in the AAAS Conference, 2010;
to encourage ICSU Unions to organise sessions on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility as part of their scientific congresses;
to nominate Sylvia Rumball to represent ICSU-CFRS at the COMEST meeting in June;
to request the Secretariat to make contact with UNESCO Ethics Division; and,
to request the Secretariat to organise distribution of the ICSU-CFRS booklet at relevant meetings.

16. Issues raised by committee members

16.1 A responsibility index

A editorial was published in Nature in January 2009, 'A responsibility index: How to evaluate a nation's scientific integrity?' The editorial discussed how measures might

be developed to produce a semi-quantitative index of responsible science for any country. Key parameters for measurement included: mechanisms to prevent, identify and deal with scientific fraud; transparency and objectivity of scientific evaluation; science policy frameworks; and, openness and trust in science.

It was agreed that all of the identified parameters were central to the interests of CFRS. However, even if the resources were available, it was not an appropriate role for ICSU to develop a ranking of countries' performance on these issues. To promote self-assessments by countries was unlikely to generate reliable comparative information. It would be more effective to include such a responsibility index in overall assessments of national science systems that were routinely being conducted by research groups and various intergovernmental organisations.

17. Future Membership of CFRS

Four of the current CFRS members - Peter Anyang 'Nyong 'O, Najia Ariguib, Peter Schindler and Kan Zhang were stepping down from the Committee at this meeting. Following consultation with the ICSU membership, replacements had been identified and an additional member had also been invited to bring the total membership to 15 + 2 *ex officio* members. The full list of new members was provided for information

It was noted that both Peter Schindler and Kan Zhang had also served on the previous Scientific Committee for Freedom in the Conduct of Science (SCFCS). Peter had served as secretary to this committee for a number of years.

Decision

To express sincere thanks to Peter Anyang 'Nyong 'O, Najia Ariguib, Peter Schindler and Kan Zhang, for their valuable service on CFRS.

18. Date of the next meeting

It was noted that the date and location of the next meeting depended on the outcome of the discussions with Pugwash on the proposed workshop on converging technologies (item 5). If the workshop were to proceed in China: Taipei, it was agreed that the CFRS meeting itself should be held prior to this in China: Beijing. Otherwise, if the workshop was not feasible, then a routine committee meeting should be organised in Paris.

Decision

To hold the 7th meeting of CFRS in the period of 15-27 November, 2009, with the exact dates and location to be agreed after discussion with Pugwash and consultation with members not present.