8th Meeting of CSPR  
8-9 June 2004  
ICSU Secretariat, Paris

REPORT

M. Clegg and F. Gros (attended Day 1)  

Invited: Roberta Balstad Miller (for item 4); Marie-Lise Chanin (for item 5); and M. Nalecz, UNESCO (for item 6);  

ICSU Secretariat: L. Geller, R. Rao and C. Smith

1. Opening of the meeting and Adoption of the Agenda

All members of the CSPR were present. David Parry referred to the revised agenda that included three additional documents.

Decision taken: Agenda was adopted

2. Follow up to the Report of the 7th Meeting

Decision taken: The report was noted; no specific follow-up actions specified.

3. ICSU strategic planning process

The Executive Director presented the latest version of the Strategic Planning (SP) memo, and provided an update on the planning process. CSPR had a wide-ranging discussion about the SP, and raised the following general points:

- In the context of ICSU’s overall mission of strengthening international science for the benefit of society, the SP must address ICSU’s dual role in supporting both curiosity-driven and policy-driven research. The current draft focuses heavily on ‘science for society’, but if ICSU does not also address issues of basic concern to the scientific community (such as data infrastructure and freedom in the conduct of science) it will lose the support of its own constituency.
• The report should start by defining the basic mission, vision, and guiding principles of the organization, to provide a framework for the document and a basis for setting priorities.

• Other leading questions: How do we want to see the world of international science evolving over the next decade? What is ICSU’s role in making that happen? What important developments simply won’t happen if ICSU does not get involved?

• One possible way that the SP could define the respective roles of the ICSU membership is that the Unions focus on making science intellectually exciting, while the National Members focus on making science professionally rewarding.

• The strategic planning process will require making hard choices. We should identify a few key priorities for new activities and do them well, rather than trying to do everything. At the same time, the SP must have enough flexibility to incorporate new ideas and situations as they arise.

• The SP must grapple with the fact that new organizations (such as IAP/IAC) are now taking on some of the roles that ICSU has traditionally filled.

• Regional Offices. The regional offices could become an important mechanism for increasing ICSU’s sensitivity to cultural differences in the role and conduct of science. It must be acknowledged, however, that the regional offices do not cover all parts of the world.

• Membership issues. Developing a truly worldwide membership must be a central goal for ICSU. With respect to the Union structure, we must first determine our priorities and goals, and then determine what new Unions may be needed to meet these goals.

• There should be a sunset clause for all ICSU bodies, but we must carefully define the mechanism for this. At a minimum, there must be a regular review of all programmatic activities.

• One of the goals in the SP should be to increase engagement with the private sector. It is also important to engage ‘civil society’, but this is much more difficult, as it must occur primarily at the local level.

• New priority areas should come from the Foresight Analysis exercise. It is widely agreed that this exercise should become a recurring activity for ICSU (perhaps repeated every 6 years; i.e., every other GA cycle). The applications that are submitted to the ICSU Grants programme can provide another useful source of insight into the evolving priorities of the ISCU membership.

• Given the tremendous complexity of the strategic planning process, it would be helpful for the Secretariat to play a leading role in developing a draft plan, which CSPR can then critique and revise as needed. CSPR should use the time between meetings to continue their work through email discussions.

**Decision taken:**
to request the Secretariat to take note of the above suggestions, and to propose a plan for how CSPR members can be actively involved in the SP drafting process.

4. PAA Scientific Data and Information

The Chairperson of the PAA panel, Roberta Balstad Miller, attended for part of this item to present the report and discuss its recommendations with CSPR. The ICSU bodies that were reviewed as part of the PAA had already had an opportunity to comment on the draft and their responses had been considered by the Panel and incorporated where appropriate.

The report contained many important recommendations for the ICSU Executive, ICSU members and interdisciplinary bodies, and other key stakeholders. Its main recommendation, which was explored in depth by the CSPR, was that ICSU should take the lead in developing a new World Data and Information Framework. There was strong support for this proposal, which integrated many of the other recommendations in the report. However it was suggested that the name be changed to Scientific Data and Information Forum (SciDIF) to more accurately reflect the necessary active integration and transition of existing activities as opposed to the establishment of a new bureaucratic super-structure. (The SciDIF terminology is used by CSPR in the decisions given below).

One concern of the CSPR with regards to the report was its limited coverage of some topics, such as medical health care and personal data records. Although it was recognized that other international organizations were already addressing these issues, it was recognized that the report was already very broad in scope and it was not feasible to fully cover all data and information issues in a single assessment. Nevertheless, it would be important to clearly lay out the scope and boundaries of the assessment in the preface to the report before publication.

Decision taken:

CSPR made the following recommendations for consideration by the Executive Board:

1. ICSU should take the lead in developing a Scientific Data and Information Forum (SciDIF) and that an ad hoc committee should be established to ensure its implementation as described in the PAA report. [see recs 1, 2, 57 and 58 in the report]

2. With minor changes to the wording, all the recommendations concerning existing ICSU bodies [recs 41-56] should be implemented. Specifically:

   - CDSI should be disbanded [rec 41];
   - INASP should be formally recognized as an interdisciplinary body [rec 44];
   - In the context of SciDIF, CODATA should develop a long-term strategy and should place a strong emphasis on bridging the digital divide [rec 48];
   - ICSU should play a strong role in the Global Observing Systems and the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) [recs 52 and 53];
   - FAGS should not longer be an ICSU interdisciplinary body [rec 54]. In making this decision, the PAA noted the recommendation from the Unions most closely linked to FAGS, in their response to an earlier request by the CSPR;
   - With regard to the WDCs, ICSU should re-examine its whole data centre infrastructure. This effort should be integrated into the development of SciDIF [rec 55];
ICSU should encourage the three main union partners of IUCAF to organise a meeting to ensure that IUCAF becomes a truly interdisciplinary committee [rec. 56].

The importance of implementing all of these recommendations in a way that ensures full integration of future activities into an over-arching SciDIF was emphasized [recs 57 and 58].

3. Several other key recommendations in the report should be specifically endorsed by ICSU. These relate to:

- Scientific publishing [recs 12-15];
- Intellectual property rights [recs 39 & 40]
- Ethical issues [rec 29]

It was noted that the role for ICSU in implementing some of the recommendations on publishing [recs 13, 14] was indirect, but the recommendations were nevertheless very important. With regards to IPR and ethics, further discussion with ICSU members would be required to define what ICSU action would be most effective.

4. Two very important recommendations concerning ICSU policy on access to data and information should be strongly endorsed:

- ICSU should continue to stand firmly behind the principle of full and open access to scientific data [rec 36];
- With regard to scientific publishing, ICSU should ensure that the principle of universal and equitable access to scientific publications is upheld [rec 37];

It was considered that access issues were perhaps not emphasized as strongly as they might be in the report, although it was noted that ICSU had developed a very important Agenda for Action and other key documents for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS, Geneva, 2003), which had a major focus on access issues. The proposal to include this Agenda for Action as an annex to the PAA report [rec 34] was strongly endorsed.

5. The issue of who pays [rec 38] was recognized to be a critical issue in the development of SciDIF. It was not clear how ICSU could directly influence this but it was recommended that, sooner rather than later, approaches be made to research funding agencies and other key partners. The role and composition of the ad hoc committee to implement SciDIF [rec2] would be important in this regard.

6. All the other recommendations in the report concerning the production, management and dissemination of data (Chapters II-IV) were supported with a recommendation that, following consultation with ICSU members, the report be published and widely disseminated. It was further proposed that prior to publication, a hierarchy of recommendations be prepared as an explanatory annex to the report; this would identify which recommendations are principally addressed to which audience - ICSU Executive; ICSU family; other stakeholders.

7. This insightful and ambitious report is approved by CSPR in its entirety, with sincere thanks to the Roberta Balstad Miller - the Panel chair and the other Panel members.
5. Energy for Sustainable Societies

Marie-Lise Chanin and Laurie Geller discussed the final report from the Working Group on ‘Energy for Sustainable Societies’. Some CSPR members expressed concern that the report did not propose a grand vision or long-term strategy for ICSU involvement in this issue. They felt that the Working Group’s specific proposals might be appropriate as Union activities or perhaps as Grant projects, but were generally too narrow to view as major new ‘ICSU initiatives’. In response, it was explained that the Working Group felt it was realistic to propose activities that are relatively narrow in scope, given ICSU’s limited expertise in the relevant areas of engineering and social science, and the fact that there are numerous other international organizations already addressing energy R&D issues.

Decision taken:
To note the report, but defer making recommendations for action until CSPR can evaluate the proposed energy activities within the context of the full spectrum of activities being proposed through the various strategic planning efforts.

6.1 Review of Grant Applications for 2005

Forty applications were received, requesting a total of US $2,656,658. The budget available under the grants programme for 2005 is US$350,000. The Executive Director briefed CSPR on the current budget situation and reasons that led to the shortfall in funding. He explained that every effort is being made to secure additional funds (of approximately $225,000) from the United States State Department.

The CSPR discussed the grant proposals according to the procedure agreed prior to the meeting. After members had declared any conflicts of interest all proposals were graded and ranked in the presence of Mr. Nalecz, Director, Division of Basic Sciences, UNESCO. Because of the severely limited budget, it was agreed that no more than one grant should be awarded to the same lead applicant. Particular attention was paid to strategic criteria, including those defined by UNESCO, in ranking A-graded proposals.

It was agreed that grant recipients should be asked to acknowledge their source of funding in any publications resulting from grant-funded activities. Likewise, we need to consider the fact that grant-funded activities may yield results that have Intellectual Property Rights value. It was agreed to revisit the IPR matter at a later meeting.

It was noted that some of the applications, especially the budgets and the letters of support, are poorly done. It is necessary to enhance the level of detail and specific support from additional applicants.

There was further debate about the best grading system to use, but there was no clear consensus on this matter. It was agreed to defer this matter to the next meeting.

Decision taken:
To approve seven proposals and additional proposals will be supported subject to availability of additional funds from the U.S. (Annex 1).
The lead reviewer should send the draft summary review to all the reviewers for sign-off before it is submitted to Secretariat, especially if there is not full agreement on the assigned grade.

The Grants applicants should be made aware of the current financial situation, and plans to secure continued financing of the Grants Programme.

6.2 Evaluation of Final Reports on Grants 2003

The final reports on 2003 Grants were evaluated, and the Committee felt this exercise to be useful. The final reports showed mixed results. Some Grant recipients appear to have met all of their proposed goals, while others seem to have fallen well short of what was proposed (or the outcome is not sufficiently clear to judge).

It was suggested that it may be better to ask for the final reports 2-3 years after the project is initiated, since in many cases, one year is not enough time to allow for adequate progress. However, it was then noted that due to UNESCO’s yearly reporting requirements, and annual final reports are still necessary.

There must be some form of accountability and feedback to those submitting final reports, including positive recognition for successful activities, and acknowledgement of the shortcomings in unsuccessful activities. If the final reports are incomplete or inadequate, we should demand that they be resubmitted.

M. Nalecz noted that CSPR’s evaluations of the final reports are extremely useful to UNESCO.

Decision taken:
When the final reports are sent to the CSPR members, a copy of the original proposal and reviews should be included. Whenever possible, one of the original reviewers should be asked to review the final report; and bodies receiving Grants should again be reminded of the necessity to provide quality reports so that success and impact can be properly evaluated.

7. Foresight Analysis

An overview of the latest ‘Foresight Analysis’ draft was presented by Laurie Geller. CSPR agreed that the report is a valuable document, and that the process overall was a satisfying and useful way to identify priorities for action based on the views of ICSU’s membership. It was suggested that the following changes be made before the report is shared publicly.

It would be helpful to better define the ‘health’ topic, perhaps by dividing the discussion into sub-categories.

The description of the topics ‘Data and Information’ and ‘Energy’ need to be updated in light of the new reports from ICSU panels.

Revisions should be made to the description of the topics ‘Sustainable Development’ (which focuses too much on process, not enough on substance) and ‘Capacity Building’ (which sounds too self serving).
Decision taken:
to approve the report and the recommendations contained therein, subject to the changes above being made.

8. Dates for future meetings

Decision taken:
Dates for future meetings are:
29 Nov – 1 Dec 2004
7-8 June 2005

9. Any Other Business

ICSU-ISSC Assessment of IHDP

IHDP is at a critical stage in terms of scientific development and even its continued existence. Increasingly, the IHDP is being called upon to provide the social science component to many international initiatives (inter alia, CSD, IGBP, the joint projects of ESSP, IGOS). Determining if IHDP is an effective programme is critical not only to the programme itself but to the larger community.

IHDP has asked for an international external assessment of the programme; this review will be funded by the German Science Foundation (DFG, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft). Formally this assessment will be carried out by ICSU and ISSC, and Ali Kazancigil, Secretary General of ISSC, has expressed keen interest to work closely with ICSU on this assessment. IHDP has provided draft ToR of this evaluation; once these have been considered and amended by ISSC and ICSU, they will be adopted by the assessment Panel. This panel will likely be a five-member body with a majority of social scientists. ICSU and the ISSC will jointly decide on the evaluators, who are expected to draft a final report before April 2005.

Decisions:
1. To note that the CSPR will be the ICSU body taking the lead for this IHDP assessment;
2. to invite Graeme Pearman to be the CSPR liaison person for this review;
3. to amend the ToR to make them more impartial and to focus them on the scientific achievements of the programme; and
4. to note the consultations with ISSC regarding the composition of assessment Panel, based upon the CSPR’s suggestions.