

COALITION CALENDAR

October 17-19, 2022: AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference

The 2022 AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference will be held on October 17-19. Public health conditions permitting, the current plan is for a hybrid event, with some sessions online and other events in person at AAAS headquarters in Washington, DC. More information about this year's conference theme and the call for session proposals coming soon.

COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

2021 Conference Recordings Online

Recordings of the majority of sessions from the 2021 AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference are now online on the AAAS YouTube channel, including the plenary sessions on diversity, equity, inclusion and human rights, the use of DNA to reunite separated migrant families, and more. You can watch the recordings as a playlist [here](#).

Joint Statement in Support of Afghan Scholars and Students

Several Coalition members—the American Anthropological Association, the American Philosophical Association, the American Political Science Association, and the American Sociological Association—were among the signatories of a [letter](#) to President Joe Biden, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas seeking immediate action to enable the safe and speedy relocation of Afghan students and scholars in the U.S. They are asking the U.S. government to do the following: (1) create a dedicated visa category for Afghan scholars and students to be admitted to the U.S.; (2) waive intent-to-return and home residency requirements for existing visa categories for the foreseeable future for Afghan applicants; and (3) expedite processing of humanitarian parole for Afghan scholars and students who can show full offers of study, research or work in the U.S. with a host university, college or association.

ASA Statement on the Dismissal of Turkish Statistics Chair

The American Statistical Association (ASA) and the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) issued a [joint statement](#) to raise concerns over the dismissal of Sait Erdal Dinçer as Head of the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) by Turkey's President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, at a time when the country is experiencing high levels of inflation. "The RSS and ASA condemn political interference in the production of official statistics and urge President Erdoğan to reassure those statisticians working for the TUIK that they are free to produce objective statistical information that serves not just the government but the Turkish public," said the statement. The ASA Committee on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights reviewed the statement and recommended the ASA Board of Directors endorse the statement.

CALLS FOR INPUT

Mar 7: Call for Input: UN Report on Mercury, Small-Scale Gold Mining, & Human Rights

The Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights is seeking input from States and other stakeholders to inform his thematic report on mercury, artisanal, and small-scale gold mining and human rights. The report will be presented to the 51st session of the UN Human Rights Council in September 2022. The deadline to submit input is March 7, and further information may be found [here](#).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

March 3-5: Online Conference on Women's Empowerment through Systems Model Expansion

The International Science Council, a non-governmental organization focused on the natural and social sciences, along with other partners, will be holding an [online conference](#) March 3–5, 2022, on women’s empowerment and gender equality, including ways to promote human rights-based and evidence-informed interventions tailored to girls’ and women’s needs, particularly vulnerable communities. The International Conference on Advancing Women’s Empowerment through Systems Model Expansion will feature an interdisciplinary team of experts to advance knowledge and interventional strategies toward empowering women and strengthening gender equality as well as to spotlight the state of technology and systems innovations in identifying and equipping agents of change. Further information may be found [here](#).

March 23-24: Virtual Workshop on COVID-19’s Impact on the Careers of Women in STEM

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine will hold a virtual workshop on March 23-24, 2022, to explore the long-term impact of COVID-19 on the future careers of women in STEM. Further information may be found [here](#).

SCIENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE USA

White House Releases Plan To Improve Scientific Integrity in Gov’t Policy, Practices

Late last month, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy released a [report](#), *Protecting the Integrity of Government Science*, the first-ever comprehensive assessment of scientific integrity policy and practices in the U.S. government. The report followed a January 2021 Presidential Memorandum on Restoring Trust in Government Through Scientific Integrity and Evidence-Based Policymaking, which created a Scientific Integrity Task Force to review scientific integrity policies, consider whether they prevent political interference in the conduct, management, communication, and use of science, and identify effective practices for improving their implementation.

The report builds on six principles of scientific integrity identified in 2009 under the Obama Administration to include five additional principles. These are: (1) *Dissent*, to underscore the importance of scientists’ ability to freely voice legitimate disagreements to improve science; (2) *Whole of Government*, to apply evidence-based policymaking to not only science-based agencies and departments, but all federal agencies and departments engaged in the production, analysis, communication, and use of evidence, science, and technology; (3) *Science at the Policy Table*, using science to inform policy and management decisions and having scientists participate actively in policy-making; (4) *Transparency in Sharing Science*, to promote transparency in the generation of knowledge and, therefore, allowing federal scientists to speak freely, if they wish, about their unclassified research, including to members of the press; and (5) *Accountability*, to specify that violations of scientific integrity should be considered on par with violations of government ethics, with comparable consequence.

Case of Engineering Professor Over China-Related Disclosure Requirements Dismissed

Last month, federal prosecutors [dismissed](#) a case brought by the U.S. government against Gang Chen, a professor of engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), who had been indicted, under the China Initiative, in connection with his alleged omission of certain China-related affiliations in an application for a U.S. Department of Energy grant. Following his arrest in January 2021, more than 200 MIT faculty members [issued](#) a letter supporting Chen. Prosecutors have since acknowledged that he did not unlawfully conceal information from the government. His case raises larger rights-based considerations in academic research and funding. Further information on the case may be found [here](#).

55 Civil Rights Groups Call for Gov’t To Investigate AI Audio Surveillance in Prisons

Fifty-five civil rights groups and public defenders offices, led by the Surveillance Technology Oversight Project (S.T.O.P.), an anti-surveillance advocacy organization and legal services provider, and Worth Rises, a non-profit advocacy organization for prison reform, have signed [letters](#) to the U.S. Department of Justice and New York State officials to call for an investigation of the use of artificial intelligence (AI) audio surveillance

in prisons and jails. The letters to U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland, U.S. Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke, New York State Attorney General Letitia James, and New York State Inspector General Lucy Lang follow reporting of federal funding for AI surveillance and the groups' concerns over privacy rights and potentially discriminatory policies.

Article Examines Ethics & Rights in Ancient DNA Research

A recent [article](#) in *Science* features an interview with researchers on the use of ancient DNA research, ways to increase the involvement of Indigenous people as partners in research, and ethical considerations in such research. The article features paleogeneticist Jennifer Raff of the University of Kansas and author of the recent book, *Origin: A Genetic History of the Americas*, and archaeologist Joe Watkins, a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Immediate Past President of the Society for American Archaeology, and a consultant at Archaeological and Cultural Education Consultants in Tucson, Arizona.

Director of White House Office of Science and Technology Policy Resigns

Eric Lander, the Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and top science advisor to the President, [resigned](#) earlier this month following a White House [investigation](#) that found credible evidence of demeaning behavior toward staff. The White House conducted the investigation following receipt of a complaint under workplace standards provided under the Safe and Respectful Workplace Policy across the Executive Office of the President. President Biden [announced](#) that Dr. Alondra Nelson, who had served as OSTP's Deputy Director, will now lead OSTP, and Dr. Francis Collins, formerly Director of the National Institutes of Health, will serve as Science Advisor to the President and Co-Chair of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology until permanent leadership is nominated and confirmed. President Biden highlighted several key rights-related policy goals of the OSTP, including a people's Bill of Rights for automated technologies and a national strategy for STEM equity.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

2022 AAAS Scientific Freedom and Responsibility Award Recipient: Dr. Ronald W. Jones

On February 9, AAAS [announced](#) that Dr. Ronald W. Jones, a retired obstetrician and gynecologist from Auckland, New Zealand, is the recipient of the 2022 [AAAS Award for Scientific Freedom and Responsibility](#). Dr. Jones received the award for his work defending patients' rights and scientific integrity and for maintaining the spotlight on these principles. He helped uncover one of the biggest medical scandals in New Zealand history, as part of a group of three doctors who exposed ethical abuses in a study looking at cervical carcinoma in situ, or CIS. More information about Dr. Jones's work and the award is available [here](#).

UN Secretary-General Highlights the Need for Gender Equality, Inclusion in Science

In his [message](#) marking the International Day of Women and Girls in Science on February 11, UN Secretary-General António Guterres called for an enabling environment where "today's girls become tomorrow's leading scientists and innovators, shaping a fair and sustainable future for all." He added that "[t]oday, only one in three science and engineering researchers in the world is a woman" and that "structural and societal barriers" are preventing women and girls from "entering and advancing in science."

In a [joint message](#), Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and Sima Bahous, Executive Director of [UN Women](#), cited the 2021 [UNESCO Science Report](#) in pointing to systemic disparity. They highlighted that women remain underrepresented among senior scientists in academia, are awarded less research funding than men, and are less likely to be promoted.

UN Experts Call for New Binding Agreement on Plastics and Human Rights

UN human rights experts [are calling](#) on the UN Environment Assembly, the world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment, to address the human rights impacts of plastics and kick-start international

negotiations on a new binding agreement. “Plastics are a global threat to human rights, including not only the right to a healthy environment but also the rights to life, health, food, water and an adequate standard of living,” said Marcos Orellana, the Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights, in a UN statement. He and other UN experts are calling for a new instrument on plastics that incorporate human rights standards. This involves guaranteeing access to information, such as on chemicals added to plastics and plastics producers, and public participation in the design and implementation of plastics policies and in the elaboration of the new instrument.

UN Human Rights Experts Call for Halt of Data Surveillance Plan in Cambodia

UN human rights experts [are urging](#) Cambodian authorities to halt the planned implementation of data surveillance legislation, saying it is repressive and further undermines privacy rights and democratic freedoms in the country. The “Sub-decree on the Establishment of the National Internet Gateway,” which was due to come into effect on February 16, permits the Cambodian government to monitor internet activity, intercept and censor digital communications, and collect, retain, and share personal data of users. The UN experts say the plan will have a serious negative impact on internet freedom, human rights defenders, and civil society.

Litigation Begins in Case over Indigenous Rights in Guatemala

Earlier this month, lawyers for an Indigenous community in eastern Guatemala made arguments before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in a case that could have far-reaching implications for Indigenous communities throughout the Americas, as reported by [NBC News](#). The community of Agua Caliente, one of 16 Maya Q’eqchi’ communities in the El Estor municipality, is demanding that the Guatemalan government give them title to their land and the right to determine how its natural resources are used.

UN Human Rights Experts Call for Sweden To Halt Open-Pit Mine

UN human rights experts [are urging](#) Sweden not to issue a license for an iron-ore mine in the Gállok region, home of the Indigenous Sámi people, saying the open-pit mine will generate vast amounts of pollution and toxic waste and endanger the protected ecosystem, including reindeer migration. Last month, Sweden enacted a national law on consultation, which requires the Government and State administrative authorities to consult representatives of the Sámi people before making decisions on matters that may be of particular importance to the Sámi. While the law is not yet in force, the UN experts are calling on Swedish authorities to construct future good-faith relations with Indigenous peoples at the national level, based on recognition of their cultural heritage and traditional livelihoods.

Science Article Details Successful Relocation of Afghan Scientists

A recent [article](#) in *Science* details the experience of five Afghan scientists who left the country and relocated to Rwanda under support provided by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine.

Healthcare Workers Face Harassment During COVID-19 Pandemic

The Centre for International Governance Innovation: an independent think tank, [summarizes](#) recent examples of online and in-person harassment of healthcare professionals in Canada and elsewhere during the COVID-19 pandemic.

NEW REPORTS AND RESOURCES

Study Shows Need for Better Gender Equality in Science Academies and Disciplinary Groups

GenderInSITE, an international initiative to promote the role of women in science, innovation, technology, and engineering, has [released the results](#) of a study to ascertain the inclusion and participation of women scientists in science academies and disciplinary groups and to make recommendations to improve inclusion. The academies and disciplinary organizations surveyed in the study are members of the InterAcademy Partnership or the International Science Council, and in total, represent more than 250 organizations. An additional article summarizing key findings may be found [here](#).

Amnesty International Publishes Research on Facial Technology, Surveillance in NYC

Amnesty International has issued an [analysis](#) of stop-and-frisk practices and the use of facial recognition technology as a surveillance tool by police in New York City that shows their disproportionate use in non-white neighborhoods. “Our analysis shows that the NYPD’s use of facial recognition technology helps to reinforce discriminatory policing against minority communities in New York City,” said Matt Mahmoudi, Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights Researcher at Amnesty International, in commenting on the analysis. “We have long known that stop-and-frisk in New York is a racist policing tactic. We now know that the communities most targeted with stop-and-frisk are also at greater risk of discriminatory policing through invasive surveillance.” Mahmoudi was a speaker at the October 2021 Coalition conference in a workshop on facial recognition technology.

Amnesty International Issues Report on Equitable Access to COVID-19 Vaccines

Amnesty International has issued a [study](#) to call for greater efforts by the private sector to increase access to COVID-19 vaccines in low-income countries. The full report may be found [here](#).

WHO Policy Brief Stresses Protection of Rights of Older People in AI

In a [new policy brief](#), the World Health Organization (WHO) provides legal, non-legal, and technical measures that can be used to minimize the risk of exacerbating or introducing ageism through artificial intelligence (AI). WHO highlights eight measures to avoid ageism in AI, including participatory design of AI technologies by and with older people, age-diverse data-science teams, and age-inclusive data collection. The agency also recommends investments in digital infrastructure and digital literacy for older people and their healthcare providers and caregivers. It also calls for protection of rights of older people to consent and contest and governance frameworks and regulations to empower and work with older people. Finally, WHO asks for increased research to understand new uses of AI and how to avoid bias and robust ethics processes in the development and application of these technologies.

PEOPLE

AAAS’ Theresa Harris Testifies at Congressional Hearing

Theresa Harris, the interim director of the AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program, spoke at the February 8 U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Science, Space and Technology’s hearing “Data Challenges Impacting Human Trafficking Research and Development of Anti-Trafficking Technological Tools.” A recording of the hearing [is available here](#).

Coalition Steering Committee: Welcome to Alison Dundes Renteln and Thank You to Mindy Reiser

Last fall, Mindy Reiser completed her second term as a Member-at-Large on the Coalition’s Steering Committee. Thank you, Mindy, for all you have done for the Coalition! We are pleased to welcome Dr. Alison Dundes Renteln, Professor of Political Science, Anthropology, Public Policy and Law at the University of Southern California and one of the representatives of the American Political Science Association to the Coalition Council, as the new Member-at-Large on the Committee.

Farewell and Thanks to Lori Brown

After more than eight years of work with the American Chemical Society (ACS) and the Coalition, Lori Brown, Senior Manager, Global Outreach at ACS, has taken on a new opportunity as Program Manager, International Programs at the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners. Many thanks to Lori for her contributions to the Coalition and best wishes to her in the new position.

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Editor: Patricia Van Arnum

Associate Editor: Mary Cate Carroll
Contributors: Joel Ericson, Theresa Harris, Nate Weisenberg