



Science and Human  
Rights Coalition

## **AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition**

### **Foundational Documents**

(As Amended, April 2021)

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## Mission and Goals Statement

### Mission

The Science and Human Rights Coalition is a network of scientific associations, professional societies, academies, and other formal networks of scientists, engineers and health professionals (for the purposes of the Foundational Documents “science” and “engineering” are used interchangeably throughout the document and intended to be inclusive of science, engineering and the health professions). The Coalition is devoted to facilitating communication and partnerships on human rights within and across scientific communities, and between these and human rights communities. The Coalition strives to improve human rights practitioners’ access to scientific and technological information and knowledge and to engage scientists, engineers and health professionals in human rights issues, particularly those issues that involve scientists and engineers and the conduct of science. The Coalition’s work is grounded in the principles and laws set forth in the International Bill of Human Rights\* and all other relevant international human rights treaties and norms.

**Goals of the AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition** include but are not limited to:

- 1) Increasing collaborative communication, networking, and partnerships among scientific, engineering and human rights communities to enable scientists and engineers to gain a better understanding of human rights issues and human rights practitioners to gain a better understanding of the tools, expertise, and other resources that science and technology as well as scientists and engineers can offer.
- 2) Enhancing the capacity of human rights organizations to apply scientific methods, data, tools, and technologies to human rights work, but also the capacity of scientific and engineering associations to better incorporate the priorities, approaches, and methods of the human rights community into their work.
- 3) Promoting the use of scientific evidence and a transitional justice approach to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and antiracist principles as vital to human rights, as well as providing opportunities for engagement for students and student groups from diverse backgrounds.
- 4) Encouraging scientific and engineering associations to explore ways in which skills and knowledge specific to their fields may contribute to human rights.
- 5) Promoting human rights awareness and programs within scientific and engineering associations, professional societies, and academic institutions in the United States and abroad.

*\* Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its two Optional Protocols*

## Membership

### Who We Are

The AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition is a network of scientific associations, professional societies, academies, and other formal networks of scientists, engineers and health professionals that recognize a role for science and technology, scientists and engineers in efforts to realize human rights. We invite eligible organizations who share the Coalition's goals (see Mission and Goals) to participate as members. Scientific, engineering and health organizations that wish to explore involvement in the Coalition may participate as an affiliated organization or may simply attend Coalition meetings. Individuals are encouraged to participate through their scientific associations or professional societies, but may also be involved as affiliated individuals.

### Membership Categories

#### Member Organizations

*Eligibility.* Membership is open to:

- Scientific associations, inclusive of the behavioral, life, physical, and social sciences, whether or not the association is affiliated with AAAS
- Professional societies of scientists, engineers, technicians, medical professionals, public health practitioners, and related professions
- Academies of science, engineering and medicine
- Other formal networks of scientists, engineers and health professionals

Organizations both inside the United States and abroad are welcome to participate.

Member organizations may vary substantially in their level of prior involvement in human rights, although they share a recognition of the need for scientists to participate in efforts to realize human rights, and a commitment to do so in some way (applying their science or technology to human rights work, promoting specific human rights, defending the human rights of scientists, etc.). We encourage member organizations to seek the support of their governing boards in order to affirm this commitment, build a foundation of support for association activities in this area, and raise awareness among member scientists.

*Representation.* Member organizations set the direction through the Coalition Council. Member organizations must designate two committed representatives to serve on the Coalition Council. The two organizational representatives may be members of the organizational leadership, membership, and/or staff. The aim is to ensure both a voice for professional members of the organization and continuity.

*Participation.* The Coalition meets annually at AAAS headquarters in Washington, DC and/or online. Committees and project teams meet as needed to accomplish their goals. In keeping with human rights practice, the Coalition will promote a highly participatory membership, involving active and committed engagement. As such, member organizations are expected to make a meaningful contribution to the Coalition through regular and active participation in Coalition meetings, committees, and project teams.

By joining the Coalition, organizational members also commit to raising awareness within their organizations about science and human rights. Organizations can do this by:

- Forming a science and human rights committee, working group, or section within their association
- Hosting science and human rights workshops for their association's members
- Writing articles about human rights for their organization's newsletter or website
- Organizing sessions at their association's annual meetings
- Drafting case studies of how their field or discipline has or can be used to address human rights concerns

***Benefits of Participation.*** The Coalition is at present the only broad-based effort to mobilize scientific organizations and scientists in the service of human rights. Member organizations become an integral part of a collaborative effort to promote human rights through science and technology. Through this collaboration, organizations will be able to:

- Benefit from the Coalition's programs, workshops, and materials
- Receive assistance in organizing science and human rights workshops and annual meeting sessions
- Receive assistance in developing principles on science, technology and human rights for ethics codes
- Link with peers across disciplines
- Connect with the human rights community both in the United States and abroad
- Access human rights expertise
- Join the Coalition listserv and receive news and information about science and human rights developments, events, and publications

### **Affiliated Organizations and Individuals**

Scientific, engineering, and health organizations that want to explore the relevance of human rights for their disciplines or associations are welcome to participate as affiliated organizations. Although member organizations set the direction for the Coalition, affiliated organizations and individuals may help shape that direction through participation in Coalition committees and interactions with member organizations. Individual scientists, engineers and health professionals are encouraged to work through their professional societies but may affiliate with the Coalition. Only designated organizational representatives may speak on behalf of the member organizations, however.

Affiliated organizations and individuals will have the benefit of:

- Coalition support in introducing human rights to their associations
- Participation in all Coalition activities, including project teams and discussion groups
- Joining the Coalition listserv to receive news and information about science, technology and human rights developments, events, and publications

### **How to Join**

Member and Affiliated Organizations are asked to make annual contributions toward the work of the Coalition according to the Statement of Annual Contributions.

To join, please [send an e-mail](#) to [srhrl@aaas.org](mailto:srhrl@aaas.org), indicating that you or your organization would like to join the Coalition in one of the following categories, together with the information requested:

- **Member Organization:** name and contact details for your organization, its executive director, and your two representatives
- **Affiliated Organization:** name and contact details for your organization, its executive director, and your representative
- **Affiliated Individual:** your name, contact details, and discipline or field of expertise

### **Collaboration**

The Coalition welcomes the opportunity to work collaboratively with all networks of scientists and scientific associations to achieve mutual goals. Although based in the United States, the Coalition especially welcomes the opportunity to work with our counterparts abroad to facilitate the use of science and technology and the involvement of scientists and engineers in human rights issues.

### **Coalition Support**

The AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program serves as the Secretariat and provides support for Coalition activities.

## Organizational Structure

**Principles:** The Coalition is organized in accordance with the following principles:

- *Inclusive* of all interested scientific, engineering and health associations, societies, academies, and persons, in the United States and around the world, that recognize a role for science and technology, scientists and engineers in the realization of human rights, or wish to learn more about this
- *Participatory* to a high degree, both by providing ample opportunities for members (including students) to contribute and become engaged and by relying on volunteer efforts to design and carry out its programs and initiatives
- *Diverse*, promoting the use of scientific evidence and a transitional justice approach to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and antiracist principles as vital to human rights, as well as providing opportunities for engagement for students and student groups from diverse backgrounds
- *Decentralized* to encourage and support activities and new initiatives that advance collaboration between the science and human rights communities, and to be responsive to new needs, ideas, and opportunities
- *Transparent* by keeping all meetings open to both member associations and to affiliated associations and individuals and keeping materials publicly available and online.

**Coalition:** The Coalition is made up of all interested eligible organizations, and includes member associations, affiliated associations, and affiliated individuals. The Coalition meets during its annual Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference, held at AAAS headquarters in Washington, DC and online.

**Coalition Council:** The Council is composed of member associations' two committed and active representatives. The Council is the Coalition's highest policy-making and priority-setting body. It sets the direction of the Coalition, considers new initiatives, and reviews requests for new project teams. The Coalition Council meets twice a year to review and to deliberate.

**Steering Committee:** This body is comprised of the following:

- AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program (one)
- Members of Council (four)
- Members-at-Large (Council members and/or affiliated organizations or individuals (three))
- Human rights community representatives (two, rotating biannually)

The Steering Committee ensures implementation of decisions taken by the Coalition Council; selects new Coalition projects and provides guidance to project teams; and serves as the liaison between AAAS, the Coalition, scientific and engineering associations and human rights communities. With the exception of the representatives of the human rights community and Members-at-Large, Steering Committee members can only be representatives of member organizations (not affiliated organizations or individual affiliates). The Steering Committee meets every two months to carry out its responsibilities.

**Secretariat:** The AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program serves as the Secretariat and supports the Coalition through the facilitation and coordination of its activities; recruitment of qualified interns; organization of meetings; maintenance of a repository for Coalition documents and materials; coordination of the listservs; facilitation of links with the human rights community; and fundraising.

**Project Teams:** Project teams further the mission of the Coalition through activities such as hosting a webinar series on the use of specific scientific methods to support human rights, developing teaching materials to integrate human rights into STEM curricula, and more. Coalition projects are undertaken by volunteers. Project proposals must be submitted to the Steering Committee for approval, and before any written work products can be made public, they must be reviewed and approved in accordance with the Coalition's policies for publication. For more information, see the Coalition's Policies and Procedures.

**Committees:** The Steering Committee may approve the creation of special committees to oversee the implementation of specific projects.

**Coalition Meetings:** The Coalition meets during its signature event, the annual Science, Technology, and Human Rights Conference, held in October online and in-person at AAAS headquarters in Washington, DC. In addition, the schedule of meetings for the Coalition Council and Steering Committee is included below.

- Coalition: annual 2-day conference, currently held in October
- Coalition Council: twice per year, with conference calls as needed
- Steering Committee: every two months, with conference calls as needed

## **Appendix: Definitions, Elaborations, and Clarifications**

### **What are “human rights”?**

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status. All human beings are entitled to all human rights: civil, political, economic, social, and cultural. These universal rights are guaranteed by law, in the forms of treaties, customary international law, general principles, and other sources of international law. International human rights law lays down obligations of governments to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts, in order to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups. (Source: [UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (OHCHR))

### **Who is a part of the “human rights community”?**

The human rights community consists of individuals and organizations explicitly committed to and engaged in activities aimed at the realization of international human rights as laid out in the International Bill of Rights and/or related international, regional and national human rights instruments. The activities of these individuals and organizations may take many forms, including monitoring, reporting, advocating, educating, training, and advising. The focus of their work may be international, regional, national, or local, and may address specific rights, the rights of specific groups, or be centered around one activity, for example, litigation or research.

### **What is the role of the AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program?**

The AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program (SRHRL) serves as the Secretariat. As such its principal role is to facilitate the work of the Coalition. In coordination with Coalition members, SRHRL will: seek funding for Coalition activities; organize and coordinate Coalition meetings; facilitate partnerships between the Coalition and other groups/individuals working in related fields; identify appropriate trainers, experts, organizations and materials to assist project teams in their activities; host and maintain the Coalition website and listservs; publicize Coalition events and activities online and through the SRHRL newsletter; and provide other logistic and material support to activities of the Coalition, as appropriate.

### **What is “transitional justice”?**

Transitional justice is defined by the United Nations as “the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society’s attempt to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past conflict, repression, violations and abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation.” More information is available on the websites [of OHCHR](#) and the [International Center for Transitional Justice](#).

### **What is the relationship of the Coalition to other networks and coalitions?**

The Coalition will actively welcome and seek partnerships with networks and coalitions devoted to science and technology, and scientists, engineers and health professionals with an interest in exploring human rights.

### **What is the relationship of the Coalition to international scientific networks and organizations?**

Membership of the Coalition is open to international scientific, engineering and health networks and organizations, including both those based within and outside the United States. Networks and organizations that are not members of the Coalition are welcome to participate as affiliated associations. The Coalition also will lend assistance to efforts to form similar coalitions of scientific associations around the world.

**What is the relationship of the Coalition to the United Nations?**

The Science and Human Rights Coalition does not have a formal relationship with the United Nations. Representatives of UN agencies, programs, and bodies engaged in human rights work may be invited to partner with the Coalition, as appropriate. The Coalition may in the future consider seeking consultative status before the UN Economic and Social Council, thereby allowing the Coalition to be represented in the activities of the Human Rights Council.

**What is the relationship of the Coalition to individual nations?**

In keeping with international human rights norms and law, the Coalition upholds the responsibility of governments, including the United States, to international human rights obligations.