

Meeting Report

Progress Review

Mona Younis (AAAS Science and Human Rights Program)

Mona Younis welcomed everyone to the third coalition planning meeting, described the development of the coalition, and summarized the progress made to date.

Development of the Coalition:

In July 2005, AAAS organized a two-day conference that was attended by 42 representatives of scientific associations and academic institutions. The conference brought scientists together with human rights organizations to explore shared interests in specific human rights, including the right to health, academic freedom and the right to education, and the right to a healthy environment. At that meeting, attendees affirmed the need for a network of scientists engaged in human rights. In 2007, the AAAS Science and Human Rights Program (SHRP) committed itself to reviving that effort and in June organized the first in a series of planning meetings with the aim of working toward a larger public launch of the Coalition in late 2008. In order to avoid raising expectations, and to keep the meetings small enough to enable work to be done, SHRP invited only associations that had attended the 2005 conference.

Mona explained that the purpose of the planning meetings was to develop working documents that will be presented to the larger convening in 2008. While constructing the building blocks of an effective coalition together, participants also learn about each other's scientific and professional associations' human rights interests and contributions. Once the foundational documents are ready they will be presented at the public launch of the Coalition, to which all scientific associations and professional societies will be invited.

What will the coalition look like? What will it seek to accomplish? What organizational structure will it adopt? Who can join, and what will membership require? These are just some of the questions that are being tackled at planning meetings and decided at the larger convening. Mona concluded by noting that "The Coalition can basically accomplish as much or as little as we decide. If we simply combine our associations' efforts and voices on behalf of scientists under threat around the world, that is already something. But we may be able to do much more. Our role at these planning meetings is to inventory and consider all possibilities, and then propose recommendations to the larger meeting."

Progress:

After two planning meetings the following has been accomplished:

Human Rights Organizations: A report on current applications of science and technology by human rights organizations was presented; the range of applications reinforced the perception that human rights groups are turning to science in their work, and that they would welcome scientists' contributions from a variety of fields.

Scientific Associations: Meeting participants heard the results of an informal survey to determine the number of scientific societies that currently have human rights working groups, sections, and/or committees. The results showed that few societies had active groups (only 10% of the 262 societies affiliated to AAAS).

Documents: Drafts of key documents – Mission and Goals Statement, Areas of Activity – and a working document on outreach and communication, have been collaboratively produced.

Participation: 14 associations are represented, including those from life, physical, social, and behavioral sciences, and plans are underway for a meeting to be held during the AAAS Annual Meeting in February 2008 in Boston.

Mission and Goals Statement, and Areas of Activity

Lee Herring (American Sociological Association), Wendy Rotz (Washington Statistical Association) and Dinah Winnick (American Anthropological Association)

Lee Herring introduced the two draft documents—the Coalition Mission and Goals Statement and the Areas of Activity—for review and comments. He emphasized that the documents were drafts and that the discussion was intended to generate input to enable the committee to finalize these “formative and foundational documents” for presentation at the formal launch of the Coalition in 2008.

Meeting participants began by reviewing the mission and goals statement that Lee, Wendy Rotz, and Dinah Winnick drafted. The objective, as Lee described it, “was to be as general as possible while being sufficiently descriptive as to position our coalition in a space that commands credibility and respect and also contributes materially to improving the fulfillment of universal human rights around the world.”

The appended Mission and Goals Statement reflects the changes agreed to by meeting participants.

Meeting attendees then reviewed the areas of activity document. Lee explained that the seven-point document (covering 17 specific activities) was a starting point, and that except for the first – Welfare of Scientists -- the items were listed in no particular order. Lee invited meeting attendees to carefully review the proposed areas of activity to make sure that no important areas had been omitted.

Lee also handed out copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a list of the UN Millennium Development Goals to stimulate thinking. He noted that particularly relevant for the Coalition’s purposes is Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that “Everyone has the right ... to share in scientific advancement and its benefits, and “Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific ... production of which he is the author.” Lee suggested that further discussion of “science as a human right” might be warranted.

The point-by-point review and discussion produced agreement on consolidating the seven proposed areas of activity into five.

The appended Areas of Activity document reflects the changes agreed to by meeting participants.

Lee requested volunteers to draft short descriptions (objectives and specific activities) and recommendations for each of the five areas of activity:

- 1. Welfare of Scientists:** Michele Irwin and Sinead O’Gorman
- 2. Science Ethics and Human Rights:** Paula Skedsvold and Rob Albro
- 3. Service to the Community of Scientific Associations:** Brad Miller and Molly Brown

4. Service to the Human Rights Community: Susan Hinkins and Hormuzd Katki

5. Information Materials: Julie Mertus and Judith Blau

“Human Rights”: What do we mean?

Molly Brown (Association of American Geographers) and Jessica Wyndham (AAAS Science and Human Rights Program)

Molly Brown reported to the Coalition on how human rights are defined and used by those scientific associations with human rights committees or sections. She found that very few organizations define what human rights are or how they use them. Equally few have explicit human rights statements. Those that do, define human rights with reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Some supplement or modify this definition, providing information about the human rights issues they consider relevant to their activities, for example, excluding tenure disputes experienced by colleagues abroad.

Molly found that most associations appear to assume that everyone knows what human rights are. She found only limited mention of human rights on association websites and, when she did, it was as part of the title of a committee, for example, followed by a report of the action or purpose of that committee. Association websites usually did not have discrete human rights sections.

Discussions that followed revolved around how the coalition will determine its own definition of human rights. It was agreed that all activities will be based on the UDHR. There was also discussion of public statements from the Coalition regarding topical issues such as torture and other violations of human rights. Although there was universal condemnation of such violations, most people at the meeting agreed that it was both premature and unwise to issue statements at this point in the development of the Coalition.

Following Molly’s presentation, Jessica Wyndham gave a presentation on the UDHR and the international human rights system. The UDHR is the first comprehensive international statement of human rights and was developed by the UN Commission on Human Rights, chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt, at the request of the UN General Assembly. The UDHR was adopted by the General Assembly on 10 December 1948.

The UDHR identifies such rights as the right to life and freedom of expression, as well as the right to an adequate standard of living and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. It also recognizes the two overarching principles of human rights: non-discrimination and equality. It is referred to in national laws and constitutions and referenced by national and international courts and tribunals. Furthermore, it is the foundation for all subsequent international human rights instruments including the binding International Covenants, one on civil and political rights, the other on economic social and cultural rights, each of which has been ratified and binds over 157 countries.

The International Covenants together with the UDHR comprise the “International Bill of Rights.” State obligations with regard this Bill of Rights and subsequent human rights instruments can be summarized as follows: to *respect* (to refrain from interfering with or curtailing the enjoyment of human rights); to *protect* (to protect individuals and groups against human rights abuses); and to *fulfill* (to take positive action to facilitate the enjoyment of basic human rights).

Jessica explained that it is increasingly common within national laws to have a bill of rights, or otherwise provide legal recognition of human rights. These instruments usually place particular emphasis on issues of concern to the country at the time of their drafting. They often compliment the international human

rights system, but they do not override it. The international system transcends these national systems, providing universal and comprehensive human rights protection that is not subject to the vagaries of change in national political systems.

Finally, Jessica explained the important roles to be played by different actors in ensuring compliance with and implementation of international human rights law including the international Committees that monitor compliance, national courts, human rights organizations and civil society, including professional associations.

Following these presentations, Coalition members discussed the importance of defining what the Coalition means by human rights with reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and possibly also the UN Charter and the international human rights system broadly. In addition, it was suggested that the Coalition clarify in its Mission Statement that it does not represent any government.

Coalition Models

Rob Albro (American Anthropological Association) and Bahram Rajaei (American Political Association)

Rob Albro and Bahram Rajaei's meeting report follows:

The purpose of this brief presentation was to open consideration of appropriate coalition models, including the advantages and disadvantages of each. This consideration involves awareness of the key characteristics of and differences between successful coalitions, in terms of: how they include participant organizations, how they make use of and distribute available resources, how they mobilize networked groups, coalition mandates, the online profile, as well as extent of financial and staff support, among other key factors.

For the purposes of comparison we organized two different sorts of tools to facilitate this discussion. One is a matrix that we hope assists in our consideration of choices and trade-offs in coalition planning. This matrix is primarily organized in terms of the key factors of: 1. organizational structure (from centralized to decentralized), 2. leadership structure (individuals or groups, executive or town hall style), and 3. membership format (based on organizations or individuals, fixed or fluid). Our contention is that different variations of what is possible can be more easily entertained across the set or spectrum of combination of possibilities represented by the matrix.

Our second tool was to provide thumbnail descriptions of several types that range across this spectrum among existing, well-established, human rights networks. These included: 1. The U. S. Human Rights Network (USHRN), 2. the Human Rights Education Association (the host for Human Rights.Net), and 3. Public Citizen. Relevant comparative differences among these include at least the following: the structure of leadership (ranging from the loose steering committee model of the USHRN to the large and full time professional staff of Public Citizen); the difference between a representational function for partners (where members organizations seek to leverage their concerns) and campaign-specific networks (where, like Public Citizen, member organizations participate on behalf of goals that are organized by the advocacy network itself); whether it lives primarily "online" as a set of resources or "offline" as a group of lobby organizations; as well as degree and kinds of accountability to the network (e. g. dues, reciprocity, programming, as well as regularity of active participation), among other concerns.

Critical dimensions of these networked coalitions considered included whether the goal should be: participation in a broader movement; access to resources for members; more effective advocacy; training and capacity building; functioning as a kind of information clearinghouse; working with NGOs; providing assistance to member organizations; active lobbying; and more.

Our meeting discussion of potential coalition models raised a variety of concerns. One is the virtue of simply building a coalition in the relative absence of a mandate or a clearly defined identity. This was described as the “if you build it they will come” strategy. This emphasized that perhaps the most important key to our coalition-building efforts is that the coalition itself have a well-defined identity and niche. We also clarified that the AAAS Science and Human Rights Program’s effort to create such a Science and Human Rights Coalition is currently supported by the AAAS, and that the Program plans to undertake a fund-raising effort on the coalition’s behalf, once its goals are clarified. We agreed that perhaps the most important structural features to which systematic considerations needs to be given include: funding, leadership, membership, and function. In addition to AAAS the question was asked: What are European scientific societies doing? One outcome of the discussion was agreement that at least three additional models of scientific networks should be added to our existing models of human rights networks, and described in terms of the matrix we have already developed, and that these should also include at least one international example. Several examples were given, ranging from the Center for Science in the Public Interest to the Union of Concerned Scientists. This will be done in advance of our next planning meeting.

Next Steps

- Documents to be drafted for the next planning meeting:

Areas of Activity

1. Welfare of Scientists: Michele Irwin and Sinead O’Gorman
2. Science Ethics and Human Rights: Paula Skedsvold and Rob Albro
3. Service to the Community of Scientific Associations: Brad Miller and Molly Brown
4. Service to the Human Rights Community: Susan Hinkins and Hormuzd Katki
5. Information Materials: Julie Mertus and Judith Blau

Membership Statement

Beth Rudd (American Chemical Society)

Inventory of Science and Human Rights Organizations

Clinton Anderson (American Psychological Association) will report on organizations that currently work on science and human rights (PEN, SAR, etc.) to ensure that the Coalition is not duplicating but complementing other organizations’ efforts.

- Next meeting

The next planning meeting originally scheduled to coincide with the **AAAS Annual Meeting in Boston** has been postponed due to the small number of Coalition participant who will be in attendance. Instead, SHRP staff will use the Annual Meeting to reach other AAAS members and introduce them to the Coalition. The meeting is on **Saturday, February 16, 2008 (2:00-5:00 pm)**.

The **next planning meeting** (fourth) will be held on **March 3, 2008** in Washington, DC.

- “Introducing Our Members” through the SHRP Newsletter

Meeting attendees were encouraged to submit articles describing their associations’ human rights programs and activities for inclusion in the SHRP Newsletter.

Mission and Goals Statement

Mission

The Science and Human Rights Coalition is a network of scientific and professional associations devoted to facilitating communication and partnerships on human rights within and across scientific communities and between these and human rights communities. The Coalition aspires to improve human rights practitioners' access to scientific information and knowledge and to engage scientists in human rights issues, particularly those that involve scientists 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*.

Goals of this coalition include but are not limited to:

- 1) Increasing collaborative communication, networking, and partnerships between science and human rights communities, enabling scientists 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 scientists can offer.
- 2) Enhancing the capacity of human rights organizations to effectively apply scientific approaches, methods, data, tools, and technologies to human rights work.
- 3) Encouraging scientific associations to explore contributions (e.g., research, activities) to human rights that are specific to their sciences.
- 4) Promoting human rights awareness and programs within scientific 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.*

Areas of Activity

1. Welfare of Scientists

- Inventory current practices and procedures across scientific associations, and identify best practices and information resources.
- Share information and calls for action across scientific associations on behalf of scientists at risk.
- Jointly protest the suppression and detention of scientists and scholars.
- Develop a division of labor (e.g., drafting calls, contacting media) across scientific associations for action on behalf of scientists at risk.
- Identify and communicate the relevant human rights standards and law in each case.

2. Human Rights and Science Ethics

- Find the links between professional society codes of ethics and human rights and call attention to the human rights elements of professional codes as part of “bridging” work.
- Bring human rights frame and standards to scientific associations’ codes of ethics.
- Bring human rights to IRB’s (Institutional Review Boards) research standards governing the use of human subjects.
- Apply human rights standards to government science policy and codes of ethics.
- Bring human rights to the institutional practices of scientific and academic institutions.
- Develop guidelines to assist scientists to identify human rights violations.

3. Service to the Community of Scientific Associations

- Through outreach and communication, expand the network of scientific and professional associations engaged in human rights as well as their understanding of human rights.
- Organize training for scientists on human rights issues that are tailored for each specific field, incorporating human rights workshops/trainings/lectures into ongoing annual meetings.
- Hold ongoing trainings on human rights at the meetings of scientific associations in order to educate scientists about human rights generally and the connections between their work and promoting and defending human rights.
- Encourage academic institutions to introduce human rights curricula, sub-fields, and/or clinics.
- Provide training for in-coming human rights committee chairs.

4. Service to the Human Rights Community

- Establish partnerships with human rights organizations on issues of mutual interest.
- Provide scientific expertise to the human rights community via science and human rights clinics, on-call consultancies, training, forums, etc.
- Develop discipline-specific guides to identifying what qualifies as good data and research as used by human rights organizations.

5. Information Materials

- Develop information materials for scientific associations interested in setting up human rights committees, sections, etc.
- Produce materials that “translate” human rights for scientists, and science for human rights practitioners.
- Develop an on-line newsletter publicizing human rights-related activities of Coalition member associations.