

**AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition  
Council Meeting – DRAFT Minutes  
January 27, 2017  
AAAS Headquarters, Revelle  
Washington, DC**

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**Welcome and Meeting Objectives**

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Jessica Wyndham (AAAS) welcomed the Council, noting that several new Council members were in attendance. She outlined the agenda for the meeting, the objectives of which were to: make concrete decisions to implement the vision for the Coalition’s future, specifically with regard to the Coalition’s structure as set out in the Foundational Documents; establish the Steering Committee’s revised structure and membership; formally launch the new Coalition projects selected by the Steering Committee; and discuss ways the Coalition can support and share efforts by Coalition members to engage their organizations and members of their disciplines.

The minutes from the July 2016 Council Meeting were approved without change.

Wyndham presented the financial report to the Council, noting that invoices for 2017 will be sent out after the conclusion of the January 2017 meeting.

**Member Actions to Address Human Rights**

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- **Protecting colleagues at risk:** The American Mathematical Society (AMS) continues to follow the cases of individual mathematicians under threat, including a Palestinian astrophysicist and mathematicians in Turkey, and continues to urge the Department of State to reopen the case of a mathematician from the former Soviet Union who was tortured and killed in Chile; the American Physical Society (APS) commended [the release of Omid Kokabee](#), a physicist who had been jailed in Iran for five years, and is developing a database of physicists in Turkey so as to best assist them; the American Sociological Association joined the Scholars at Risk Network.
- **Connecting human rights with disciplinary practice:** The American Association of Geographers’ (AAG) 2017 Annual Meeting will feature the theme [“Mainstreaming Human Rights in Geography and the AAG,”](#) addressing human rights challenges globally; the Association for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T) held a [luncheon on diversity and inclusion](#) that included participants from around the world; the fall 2017 ASIS&T Annual Meeting will focus on [“Diversity of Engagement”](#); APS will hold a [lunch for students and early career attendees](#) to

enable discussion on human rights with the Committee on International Freedom of Scientists; the Linguistic Society of America (LSA) will submit an abstract on the language rights of children in Haiti for the upcoming symposium of the Study Group of Language at the United Nations focused on [“Language, the Sustainable Development Goals, and Vulnerable Populations”](#).

- **Including human rights in their organizations’ publications:** Sigma Xi included an article authored by Coalition representative Jeffrey Toney on the human right to water in the [November 2016 issue of “Sigma Xi Speaks”](#).

In addition, some member organization representatives reported on human rights activities that they individually carried out: Mary Gray (American Statistical Association) helped conduct an exit poll for the November 2016 general election in Northern Virginia to investigate possible voter suppression. Art Kendall (Capital Area Social Psychological Association) is writing an article for CHANCE magazine on rent courts in Maryland.

Theresa Harris (AAAS) invited Council members to send updates about these human rights activities to the editor, Patricia Van Arnum, and associate editor, Mary Cate Carroll, of the Coalition newsletter. Additionally, opportunities for the publication of original articles in the Coalition newsletter are available.

### **Coalition Vision Implementation**

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Wyndham presented the reviewed and revised Foundational Documents and Coalition Policies to the Council, reflecting the results of the Coalition visioning process. Alyson Reed (LSA) moved to approve the updated documents, and Bill Lenart (Case Western Reserve University Science and Human Rights Coalition) seconded. The documents were approved unanimously.

Wyndham presented the new Steering Committee roster to the Council. After a call for nominations at the end of 2016, two nominations were received for Mark Frezzo (American Sociological Association) and Dorothy Phillips (American Chemical Society). As a result of the Coalition visioning process, the composition of the Steering Committee has changed from 13 to 10 members. Margaret Weigers Vitullo (American Sociological Association) moved to approve the roster, and Sheryl Luzzadder-Beach (AAG) seconded. The roster was approved unanimously.

### **Coalition Project Teams**

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Harris reviewed the movement from working groups to project teams in the Coalition visioning process, which had two goals: to make the Coalition more agile and responsive to emerging human rights concerns, and to increase opportunities for engagements with members of Coalition member organizations.

In response to a question from Toni Carbo (ASIST&T), Harris clarified that two potential speakers for the previous day’s sessions had expressed initial interest, but were not approved to speak by the federal agencies where they worked. Kendall said that the problem of self-censorship will prove troublesome for many. Harris asked the Council if there were particular roles the Coalition could play in response to the new administration, particularly focusing on interacting with human rights organizations. Kendall suggested that Coalition members could encourage others to join, and could support the human rights activities of fellow member organizations and individuals. Carbo suggested that the Coalition could serve

a fact-finding role. Vitullo recommended that the Coalition's focus on Article 15 provide a platform for Coalition advocacy. Harris reminded the Council that the Coalition itself does not make statements, but individual members are encouraged to jointly develop statements.

Judith Torney-Purta (American Educational Research Association) recommended that the Secretariat work to leverage the resources of other AAAS departments, especially focusing on public communication. Joe Watkins (AMS) and Luzzadder-Beach recommended that the Coalition make use of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and existing AAAS statements, respectively. Carbo said that as addition to actions, the Coalition should try to provide useful and accurate information to individuals working in other organizations and federal agencies.

Reed said that the discussion lent itself to the development of a Coalition project proposal, and said that a project team would be a more effective way to approach this issue. She also noted that the project proposal process is a useful tool for evaluating whether members of the Coalition have the resources to actively work on an issue, shown by whether a proposal is put forth.

Wyndham informed the Council that weekly calls have been taking place among AAAS and the executive directors of larger affiliated scientific and engineering associations. She also described a proposed gathering of scientific and human rights organizations and human rights funders about the challenges faced under the new administration, focused on the misuse and abuse of science.

Watkins said that freedom of movement is crucial to the scientific enterprise and expressed concern about current limitations. Vitullo asked if there was the capacity to collect information about people's experiences under the new administration with regard to freedom of movement and being silenced. Harris noted that Scholars at Risk and the Union of Concerned Scientists may have collected some similar data. Carbo, Kendall, and Vitullo briefly discussed how that initiative may work. Brian Gran (Sociologists Without Borders) asked if filing amicus briefs was a viable option. In response to questions from Frezzo and Hector Delgado (Society for the Study of Social Problems), Wyndham clarified the difference between AAAS and the Coalition. The Coalition cannot issue statements, due to the challenging nature of finding consensus across many organizations. The Secretariat encourages member organizations to endorse AAAS statements or write their own.

Harris summarized the conclusion of the discussion, indicating that the path forward includes assessing interest in developing a project team and proposal to develop practical next steps. She said that in a survey of Coalition members, it became clear that individual members of the Coalition have more time to pursue Coalition projects, and that it is crucial to provide them with those opportunities. Harris described the first project proposal process, noting that almost all of the volunteer participants were individual members. She asked the Council how it may be possible to get more individual members involved, directly engaged in existing projects, or engaged with the Coalition so that they may propose projects. Melvyn Nathanson (AMS) suggested that emailing the American Mathematical Society Human Rights Committee and inviting them to the Coalition may be a useful first step. Kendall recommended a more personalized approach, using individual networks. Kimberly Mealy (American Political Science Association) said that their organized section on human rights is actively involved and planning content for the annual meeting, and that these individuals may be a good constituency for Coalition membership. Ali Arab (American Statistical Association) recommended that a subcommittee be formed to define projects focused on the new administration. Wyndham said that the proposed gathering of scientific and human rights organizations to identify needs and strengths could also help inform the development of new projects.

## Article 15 Update

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Wyndham updated the Council on the status of the Article 15 initiative, which originated with the beginning of the Coalition and aims to bring the perspectives of scientists, engineers, and health professionals to the United Nations process of defining the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications, as recognized in Article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The first substantive piece of the Coalition's effort was a series of disciplinary-specific focus group discussions on this topic, developed by Wyndham, together with Vitullo and the former Service to the STEM Community Working Group. The results of this effort were presented to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in October 2013, and formed the basis of a report that added to the sparse literature on the right. Highlights of the results include: an elaboration of the benefits of scientific progress and its applications, including many that extend beyond material benefits; the development of a "continuum of access," a conceptual tool used to discuss the differential needs of individuals vis-à-vis science as they range from laypeople to trained scientists; and the identification of the tools and mechanisms needed to facilitate access to science. The focus group project was limited in that it only involved scientists based in the United States.

To this end, AAAS received a modest grant from the Open Society Foundation to support the following activities:

1. A global questionnaire that reached 3,600 scientists, engineers, and health professionals and provided a large amount of data for analysis. The questionnaire, which focused on the benefits of science and government actions to support science, was translated into French and Spanish. However, responses were biased towards North America.
2. A partnership with Coalition member Natallia Sianko and her colleague Patricia Carbajales-Dale at Clemson University to develop data visualizations from the periodic reports developed by states party to the treaty in which they outline the steps they have taken to meet their obligations under. These visualizations revealed patterns over time, and indicated that states were more likely to report substantively on Article 15 the higher the number of articles and journals published in that country, and the higher their GDP.
3. Collaboration with Council member Mark Frezzo and his colleague David Brunsma to undertake a qualitative analysis of information from these periodic reports.

Vitullo expanded on this introduction, noting that a particular focus of the current research is to create a dialogue between what scientists, engineers, and health professionals think, and how states discuss the right in the period state report. Wyndham added that it is very important that the UN understand how states party to the Covenant understand the right. Wyndham and Vitullo will travel to Geneva to present the findings thus far to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in February 2017

In response to questions from Gran and Kendall, Frezzo noted that the number of states who report is increasing, the diversity of response is impressive, and that many states report on all aspects of Article 15, emphasizing the relationship between science and culture. Watkins asked if there was a community focusing on the other parts of Article 15, such as Article 15 1a, the right to participate in cultural life, or Article 15 1c, regarding intellectual property rights. Wyndham said that the UN has developed general comments on cultural life and intellectual property, but not on Article 15 1b, the right to benefit from scientific progress and its applications. Reed noted that a number of Coalition member organizations have disciplinary emphases that straddle science and culture. Wyndham noted that recent special rapporteurs on cultural life have focused on different aspects of the mandate.

Wyndham also said that two new individual members of the Coalition, Andrea Boggio and Cesare Romano, are taking a legal approach to Article 15, developing “shadow reports” on the right from the point of view of civil society. Vitullo noted that Article 15 is becoming immediate and urgent in the United States, and the current context could provide a case study for the application of Article 15.

### **Student Engagement**

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Harris updated the Council on the progress of increased student engagement efforts, noting that there is a better turnout of students at the July meetings than at the January meetings. The Coalition has increased engagement through its student competitions. The essay competition is in its fourth year, and a new digital media competition will be announced at the 2017 AAAS annual meeting. The digital media competition provides an opportunity for students to create a website, video, app, or other digital content, and write a description indicating how it relates to science and human rights. Entries will be judged on how well the media matches its stated goal.

Harris also introduced the first student organization to sit on the Council, the Case Western Reserve University Science and Human Rights Coalition. A proposal for developing a toolkit that helps other students start their own organizations is being developed.

In response to a question from Reed, Harris described campus chapters of Amnesty International, Physicians for Human Rights, and STAND. Lenart said that these chapters are almost exclusively comprised of undergraduates. The goal of the Case Western Reserve University Science and Human Rights Coalition is to coordinate more specific activities with undergraduates, and to be a place for graduate students to get involved. Watkins noted that it is very difficult to merge established groups, and recommended that new student organizations take the time to form an identity. He also recommended that organizations network laterally among themselves. Harris clarified that these student groups are not chapters of the Coalition, but are freestanding organizations. Reed suggested that members of pre-existing student organizations may be interested in the Coalition, expanding reach beyond student members of Coalition member organizations, a comment echoed by Vitullo. John Dale (Society for the Study of Social Problems) said that student-run conferences may provide an opportunity for student engagement. Kendall noted that other issues may be framed in the human rights contexts. Mealy seconded that point, noting that many campuses may not have human rights groups, but may have groups working on particular social justice issues. Networking with these groups may provide an opportunity to channel energy in the link between activism and scientific research.

### **Coalition Visioning – Next Steps**

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Wyndham reviewed the other aspects of the Coalition visioning process, including engaging more robustly with human rights organizations, developing a robust outreach plan, and creating a Coalition Fellowship program to support junior faculty. In response to a question from Reed, Wyndham expanded on the scope of the outreach plan, noting that it will include the public, policymakers, and scientific organizations, be they members of the Coalition or not. This is an effort that should be developed in between Council meetings by the Secretariat and the Steering Committee. This document will not need Council approval, but would benefit from Council input. Reed suggested that communications officers and outreach staff from larger member organizations should also be involved.

Torney-Purta recommended that an individual from the National Academy of Science Committee that recently released a science communication report could also have important insight. Vitullo noted that science communication could be a potential topic for a Coalition meeting. Carbo, Dale, Reed, Abebe Rorissa (ASIS&T), and Wyndham discussed various aspects of science communication, including special issues of journals, open source software and open access journals, and the responsibilities of scientists in communicating science in understandable language.

### **Other Business**

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Wyndham announced that the theme of the July 27-28, 2017 meeting will be Article 15.

## Meeting Attendees

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Symone Alexander	Case Western Reserve University Science and Human Rights Coalition
Ali Arab	American Statistical Association
Toni Carbo	Association for Information Science and Technology
John Dale	Society for the Study of Social Problems
Hector Delgado	Society for the Study of Social Problems
Mark Frezzo	American Sociological Association
Brian Gran	Sociologists Without Borders
Mary Gray	American Statistical Association
Michele Irwin	American Physical Society
Art Kendall	Capital Area Social Psychological Association
Bill Lenart	Case Western Reserve University Science and Human Rights Coalition
Sheryl Luzzadder-Beach	American Association of Geographers
Kimberly Mealy	American Political Science Association
Oliver Moles	Capital Area Social Psychological Association
Melvyn Nathanson	American Mathematical Society
Alyson Reed	Linguistic Society of America
Abebe Rorissa	Association for Information Science and Technology
Lindsey Thomas	Council on Undergraduate Research
Jeff Toney	Sigma Xi
Judith Torney-Purta	American Educational Research Association
Gabe Twose	American Psychological Association
Margaret Weigers Vitullo	American Sociological Association
Joe Watkins	American Mathematical Society

### **AAAS Staff:**

Theresa Harris	AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program
Katlin Kraska	AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program
Ellen Platts	AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program
Jessica Wyndham (Coalition Coordinator)	AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program