



AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition

Council Meeting Report

July 16, 2012

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Welcome, Introductions, and Meeting Objectives

Jessica Wyndham and **Mark Frankel** (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) welcomed the Council, following which Council members introduced themselves. Wyndham explained the meeting objectives: (a) to review the progress made by the Coalition thus far in engaging scientific and engineering associations in human rights and bringing human rights to their membership; (b) to assess progress in the implementation of the Joint Initiative; (c) to adopt the Coalition Plan of Action 2012-2014 as the set of goals and activities that will guide the Coalition's work over the next three years; and (d) to determine the next steps needed to begin meeting the goals set out in the Plan of Action.

The Council adopted the 2011 Meeting Report and the January 2012 and May 2012 Ad Hoc Council Meeting Reports by consensus.

Progress Reports: Member Actions to Address Human Rights

Doug Richardson (Association of American Geographers (AAG)) reviewed a number of the human rights-related activities of the AAG, including various high-profile events at their Annual Meeting: a session honoring Atlas Award winner, Mary Robinson; and a panel featuring Pulitzer Prize winning columnist Nicholas Kristof of The New York Times, Salil Shetty, Secretary General of Amnesty International, and Ivan Šimonović, Assistant Secretary-General of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. He noted that the AAG attempts to thoroughly document any human rights-related member activities and hosts a clearinghouse of information about geography and human rights on their [website](#). Richardson invited other members to share what their societies and associations have accomplished over the past year:

- **Protecting colleagues at risk:** several members reported that they are working on behalf of colleagues at risk, including writing letters on behalf of detained scholars (American Political Science Association); advocating on behalf of detained philosophers in Hungary (American Philosophical Association); advocating on behalf of a physics student detained in Iran (American Physical Society); working with members through the Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility to engage the United Nations and regional human rights mechanisms in efforts to protect the rights of statisticians in Argentina (American Statistical Association); and monitoring the ongoing case of a linguist detained in Iran (Linguistics Society of America);
- **Organizing human rights meetings/symposia for members of the discipline:** whether as part of their Annual Meeting or as a distinct event, several members have organized or hosted sessions relating to human rights and their discipline: David Schrader (American Philosophical Association) is organizing a symposium on ethics, rights and emerging technologies as part of the 2013 American Philosophy World Congress; Jessica Wyndham (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) was invited to give the closing address at the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) Dialogues, an organization whose members are demonstrating an increasing interest in social justice and human rights concerns; members of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene had a proposal accepted for the AAAS Annual Meeting to address

the human rights issues raised by fake and counterfeit drugs; and several member representatives reported that more than 10 sessions and papers on human rights are on the agenda of their Annual Meeting (American Sociological Association, Ecological Society of America);

- **Organizing human rights meetings for the general public:** several member organizations have developed outreach materials or organized meetings with partners to bring the human rights concerns relevant to their discipline to a broader public: Sigma Xi is working with student chapters to host events on human rights in their institutions; Alex Ingrams (Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues) is working with the SPSSI UN Committee to organize events and publicize human rights issues related to their discipline; and the American Society of Civil Engineers won an award for their ETHICANA program which addresses ethical issues in the context of development projects;
- **Connecting human rights with disciplinary practice:** the American Anthropological Association (AAA) is currently in the process of reviewing their code of ethics and exploring how to more explicitly incorporate human rights language into the code; the AAA is also working with the World Council of Anthropological Associations -- a network of national and international organizations designed to promote better communication and cooperation in anthropology -- to promote an anthropology of human rights (both the practice of anthropology, as better informed by human rights and an anthropology of the practice of human rights);
- **Awarding a human rights prize:** the American Physical Society awarded the Andrei Sakharov Prize for outstanding leadership in upholding human rights;
- **Researching human rights issues:** the American Education Research Association has undertaken human rights-related issues relevant to underserved populations in science, particularly lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer populations and indigenous communities; and Martha Zaslow (Society for Research in Child Development) reported that there has been an increased use of a human rights framework in reporting on issues relevant to child development.

Brad Miller (American Chemical Society) announced that the ACS leadership responded positively to an invitation to join the Coalition and will soon be nominating the two representatives who will serve on the Council and participate in Coalition activities.

Progress Reports: Areas of Work

Welfare of Scientists: Michele Irwin (American Physical Society) highlighted two projects of the group: (1) the *Primer on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights* which has been finalized and is ready for dissemination; and (2) an online network that has been created to facilitating the sharing of information about individual cases of persecuted scientists and engineers. Particularly with regard to the second project, Michele solicited input on ideas for effective follow-up to initiatives taken to advocate on behalf of persecuted individuals.

Ethics and Human Rights: Rob Albro (American Anthropological Association) announced the completion in February of the working group's report, *Intersections of Science, Ethics and Human Rights: The Question of Human Subjects Protection* (available [here](#)). The report was the

background for a workshop organized by the working group and held at AAAS on June 18. The purpose of the workshop was to begin an exploration of the connections among, science, technology, ethics and human rights *beyond* issues of human subjects protection (the meeting report is available [here](#)). The working group is now turning its focus to developing ethics and human rights case studies from the life and physical sciences, as well as engineering and the health professions. The working group will also begin to address the relationship between Article 15 and scientific responsibility.

Service to the STEM Community: Margaret Wieggers Vitullo (American Sociological Association) explained that the working group operates through three sub-groups. One is focused on the Joint Initiative, another on developing webinars on human rights for scientific and engineering societies, and the third is concerned with disseminating, evaluating and updating the Starter Kit. The working group has established a ‘team site’ to facilitate document sharing and planning, and the group meets in person (with a call-in option) once every quarter. Progress has been made in the Article 15 focus group process, with twelve focus groups having been held so far and a further three are currently planned. In addition, a civil engineering and human rights webinar is being organized for November.

Service to the Human Rights Community: Susan Hinkins (American Statistical Association) outlined two current and one planned project of the working group. The group has completed its *Human Rights Projects: Guidelines for Scientists and Human Rights Organizations*, a resource intended to facilitate partnerships between human rights organizations and scientific or engineering experts. The Guidelines will help in managing expectations and identifying potential challenges early. The Guidelines will be made available online shortly. In addition, the working group is reaching out to human rights organizations to make them aware of the expertise available through the AAAS On-call Scientists initiative. The working group is currently planning a training session on program evaluation that will take place in New York in November, with the aim of both providing a substantive understanding of how to conduct program evaluation, but also highlighting the value of working with technical experts when conducting such evaluations.

Education and Information Resources: Mark Frezzo (Sociologists Without Borders) explained that the working group continued to develop teaching modules on human rights for a variety of scientific disciplines. He highlighted the particular need for more modules to be developed in the natural sciences.

Outreach and Communication: Jeff Toney (Sigma Xi) highlighted the particular focus of the group on enhancing undergraduate student participation in the events and work of the Coalition. The Committee has proposed a student poster conference to be included on the January 2013 Coalition meeting agenda. The Committee welcomes Member input on other ways of best achieving student participation in the Coalition. Jeff also mentioned the various ways in which the work of the Coalition has been disseminated through social media, including through Twitter and Facebook. Jeff is a regular contributor to the Huffington Post and invited Council Members to co-author articles with him on human rights topics of relevance to their discipline and work.

Discussion: Outreach - Jeff Toney (Sigma Xi) agreed that all working groups should coordinate with the Outreach and Communication Committee and take advantage of the social media and other networks established by the Committee to disseminate working group products, event announcements and so forth. **Karen Goraleski** (American Society for Tropical Medicine and Hygiene) also suggested adding a blog function to the Coalition website through which brief descriptions of Coalition activities and products could be disseminated to a wider audience. **Margaret Wieggers Vitullo** (American Sociological Association) suggested using monthly Google analytics to track the usage of the Coalition website and materials.

Broader Impacts - George Middendorf (Ecological Society of America) highlighted the challenge faced among many disciplines to sell their science beyond its intellectual merit. Identifying and defining broader impacts of the sciences represented in the Coalition, including how those sciences could benefit human rights and society would also be of benefit to the development of the disciplines. **Doug Richardson** (Association of American Geographers) agreed. **Alyson Reed** (Linguistic Society of America) added that many associations face a challenge in identifying the relevance of their discipline to the everyday lives of people.

Betsy Super (American Political Science Association) shared a word of caution, warning that public engagement by scientists can come with costs, particularly questions about whether and why scientists should be involved in policy. **Doug Richardson** (Association of American Geographers) responded that the risk she identifies is not a real danger in the context being discussed because a process already exists for participation of scientists in advocating for the impacts of their science, the National Science Foundation grant-making process requires such consideration. **George Middendorf** (Ecological Society of America) added that it may not always be necessary to talk about human rights broadly, but addressing the right to science may be more effective in some cases. **Karen Goraleski** (American Society for Tropical Medicine and Hygiene) added that the role of the Coalition may be in opening the eyes of funders to human rights considerations without necessarily, or at first, being explicit that ‘human rights’ is what is being addressed.

Progress Reports: Joint Initiative

Brian Gran (American Sociological Association) reported that he is working with AAAS staff to develop a funding proposal to NSF for their work on the indicators project. **Margaret Vitullo** (American Sociological Association) updated the Council about the progress with the Article 15 focus groups. So far twelve focus groups have been convened. Vitullo is working with AAAS staff to analyze and code the focus group transcripts and participant note pages using an online statistical analysis program called Dedoose. **Clinton Anderson** (American Psychological Association) is currently presenting the findings from the APA and SPISSI focus groups at a meeting in South Africa. Vitullo stressed that there is a need for more life and physical sciences to participate in the focus group process. **Karen Goraleski** (American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene), who hosted a focus group for ASTMH, added that the focus group experience was very beneficial for her as well as for the participants. It was used as a way to reach out to local ASTMH members, and a fledgling subcommittee at ASTMH evolved from the experience.

Alyson Reed (Linguistic Society of America) asked about the timeline for the Coalition’s work on Article 15. Specifically, she asked whether there is an “end point” when it might be appropriate to share the findings with the larger scientific community. **Jessica Wyndham** (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) reported that staff hopes to have the focus group analysis complete by early 2013. She clarified that the results of the analysis, which will eventually make up the basis for a report to the UN, are not intended to be a consensus, but should be a reflection of the common themes and discipline specific issues raised with respect to Article 15. She cautioned that the Coalition should be very careful, and perhaps wary, of trying to define the right.

Council Business

Susan Hinkins (American Statistical Association) introduced several amendments to the Coalition’s Foundational Documents that were proposed by the Steering Committee as follow-up to the Coalition’s last meeting.

- Council **approved** a comprehensive change in language in the Foundational Documents to more adequately reflect the Coalition’s intention to be inclusive of engineering and the health professions. The Council approved the revised Foundational Documents.
- Council **approved** the Steering Committee recommended amendment to the effect that the Coalition Council will meet twice a year in concurrence with the semi-annual Coalition meetings. The goal of this amendment is to ensure Coalition member representatives are more regularly informed of the work of the Coalition, more actively engaged I the Coalition and are able to provide greater input and oversight.
- Council **approved** the Steering Committee recommended amendment to remove the Special Events Committee. The reason for this amendment is that the work of organizing the Coalition meetings rests primarily with the Secretariat with significant input provided by working groups and members. There is no immediate or clear reason to maintain this separate Committee.
- Council **approved** the Steering Committee recommended amendment that Member-at-Large representatives on the Steering Committee be drawn from general membership. The language of the proposed amendment was clarified to state, “general membership (member and affiliated organization representatives and affiliated individuals)”. The purpose of the amendment is to ensure the Steering Committee is representative of all perspectives necessary to effectively carry out its function in implementing the decisions of the Council.
- Council **approved** the motion to allow the Steering Committee to select the two human rights community representatives to sit on the Steering Committee, and for the Council to approve the selections.

Finally, Council was asked to make a final decision regarding the request for Coalition membership presented by the Doctors’ Council of DC. This item gave rise to a lengthy discussion about the specific nature and expectations of Coalition member organizations. Some members highlighted that the primary mission of Coalition member and affiliated organizations

is to advance science rather than to serve as a union for the profession. Other members highlighted the common goal among Coalition members to serve society through the application or involvement of their profession or discipline. A member proposed that a new membership category of “allies” of the Coalition be created, and put a motion to explore broadening the membership categories of the Coalition. Council did **not approve** with a vote of 7 in favor, 15 opposed, and 2 abstaining, a motion to explore broadening the Coalition membership categories.

Council **approved** membership of the Doctors Council of DC with a vote of 12 in favor, 8 opposed, and 4 abstaining.

Coalition Plan of Action 2012-2014 and Next Steps

Theresa Harris (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) presented the Council with the Draft Plan of Action 2012 – 2014 which, she explained, had been developed after a highly participatory process involving all Coalition members, working groups and committee. The Plan sets out ambitious goals for the Coalition and will serve as both a valuable guide for the work of the Coalition in the coming years, as well as a benchmark against which to measure the Coalition’s progress in meeting its goals. Council **approved** the draft Plan of Action as presented, including the general addition recommended by Michel DeGraff to incorporate reference to language rights in the Plan, as appropriate.

Turning specifically to the benchmark data that the Coalition aims to collect as part of the Plan of Action 2012-2014 (see pp. 40-49), Theresa explain that, in order to be able to collate and analyze the data across the Coalition, it will be necessary for all Coalition Member Organizations to provide the information requested in a timely way. **Susan Hinkins** (American Statistical Association) suggested that Council Members identify the individuals within their own associations who collect the information set out in the benchmark document and build a routine of collecting that information on an annual basis.

Finally, Constance Thompson (**American Society of Civil Engineers**) introduced the “Big and Bold” idea. She explained that the idea emerged from a discussion about effective ways of engaging all Coalition Members and Affiliates, exciting them about the opportunities of multi-disciplinary collaboration in human rights, and providing an opportunity for Members to engage their own membership in human rights activities. In discussion, there was general agreement that the “Big and Bold” idea was a good one. Alyson Reed (Linguistic Society of America) suggested that such an event could be used to identify big challenges that are cross-cutting in human rights for which scientific and engineering associations might have a role. George Middendorf (Ecological Society of America) recommended getting agricultural societies involved. In addition, Karen Goraleski (**American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene**) suggested using the “Big and Bold” event as a call to action, thereby attracting greater media attention.

Other Business and Public Comment

Rob Albro (American Anthropological Association) invited suggestions for additional business and other comments from those in attendance. **Margaret Wiegers Vitullo** (American Sociological Association) suggested that it may be time to consider a membership dues structure to help ensure the Coalition's financial stability. **Alyson Reed** (Linguistic Society of America) agreed. Others suggested exploring whether the Coalition should adopt criteria for maintaining membership. Several attendees reiterated their interest in connecting human rights with the National Science Foundation "Broader Impacts" criteria.

Appendix: Meeting Attendees

	Representative	Organization
1.	Rob Albro	American Anthropological Association
2.	Beth Ambos	Council on Undergraduate Research
3.	Jerry Baker	Sigma Xi
4.	Wm. David Burns	National Center for Science and Civic Engagement
5.	Clifford Duke	Ecological Society of America
6.	Mark Frezzo	Sociologists Without Borders
7.	Bruce Friesen	Sociologists Without Borders
8.	Juan Gallardo	American Physical Society
9.	Karen Goraleski	American Society for Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
10.	Brian Gran	American Sociological Association
11.	Liepa Gust	American Orthopsychiatric Association
12.	Susan Hinkins	American Statistical Association
13.	Alex Ingrams	Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues
14.	Michele Irwin	American Physical Society
15.	Art Kendall	Capital Area Social Psychological Association
16.	Felice Levine	American Educational Research Association
17.	George Middendorf	Ecological Society of America
18.	Megan Overbey	Association of American Geographers
19.	Steve Pierson	American Statistical Association
20.	Alyson Reed	Linguistic Society of America
21.	Doug Richardson	Association of American Geographers
22.	David Schrader	American Philosophical Association
23.	Paula Skedsvold	Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences

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| 24. | Betsy Super | American Political Science Association |
| 25. | Constance Thompson | American Society of Civil Engineers |
| 26. | Jeffrey Toney | Sigma Xi |
| 27. | Margaret Wieggers Vitullo | American Sociological Association |
| 28. | Martha Zaslów | Society for Research in Child Development |

Secretariat (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program):

Rebecca Carlson, Program Assistant

Mark Frankel, Director

Theresa Harris, Senior Program Associate

Jessica Wyndham, Associate Director and Coalition Coordinator