

AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition Council Meeting - Minutes

July 12, 2013
Washington, DC

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Welcome and Meeting Objectives

Mark Frankel (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) welcomed the Council. **Jessica Wyndham** (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) outlined the agenda for the meeting, the objectives of which were to: review progress in engaging scientific and engineering associations in human rights and bringing human rights to their membership; consider a dissemination and engagement plan for the Article 15 report to the United Nations; determine next steps in promoting science funding for human rights-related research; and agree to a fundraising plan and next steps for the Coalition. *The Council adopted the January 2013 Meeting Report.*

Progress Reports: Member Actions to Address Human Rights

Benchmarks: Checklist

Theresa Harris (AAAS Scientific Responsibility Human Rights and Law Program) drew attention to the benchmarks checklist which is vital for collecting and collating information about Member Organizations' human rights activities as they relate to the Coalition's goals. Harris will send them the link to the online form this fall and encouraged members to begin thinking about collecting the necessary information.

Human Rights Activity Updates:

- **Protecting colleagues at risk:** the Committee on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights of the American Statistical Association is continuing its human rights work on behalf of Argentinean statisticians, including the publication of an article in the [The Huffington Post](#) and the [LA Times](#); the American Educational Research Association joined Scholars at Risk this year; and the Committee on the Human Rights of Mathematicians is currently investigating a case in Egypt.
- **Connecting human rights with disciplinary practice:** the National Center for Science and Civic Engagement introduced human rights for the first time in its Washington Capitol Hill symposium and will host two sessions on human rights as part of its summer meeting for faculty development; the American Orthopsychiatric Association will soon launch a web page on the human rights activities of the Association and supports a Task Force on Human Rights; the Linguistic Society of America has begun a process to add human rights language into its code of ethics; the Council of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues approved human

rights as one of the five priority areas of focus for the organization; and Sigma Xi will work with its Standing Committees to integrate human rights into their work.

- **Including human rights in their organizations' publications:** Sigma Xi is open to publishing an article on human rights in *American Scientist*; the American Sociological Association will include an article about the Coalition meeting in its member newsletter Footnotes and recently published an [article](#) about the human rights of one of its members; the American Physical Society continues to inform members of the activities of the Coalition and other human rights related news through a [quarterly APS newsletter column](#), and will include an article on the July Coalition meeting in the fall issue; the Association for Information and Science Technology will write a special issue on the Coalition for its bulletin; **Cliff Duke** (Ecological Society of America) recently published an [article](#) on data sharing in which he mentioned Article 15; the Council for Undergraduate Research's quarterly journal spring 2014 issue will have the theme of human rights; Sociologists Without Borders recently published an [article](#) in its journal *Societies Without Borders* on engagement with the Coalition; the National Center for Science and Civic Engagement recently concluded its series of [bi-weekly articles](#) on science and human rights in its Science Education for New Civic Engagements and Responsibilities (SENCER) e-newsletter and will publish a human rights primer by Coalition Individual Affiliate Sam McFarland as part of its backgrounder series; and the American Orthopsychiatric Association regularly publishes human rights-related articles in its monthly newsletter.
- **Awarding a human rights prize:** the American Physical Society is currently seeking nominations for the Andrei Sakharov Prize for outstanding leadership in upholding human rights; the American Orthopsychiatric Association will issue its annual symposium award for excellence in social issues and human rights.
- **Issuing public statements on human rights:** the Council of the American Educational Research Association adopted a public [statement](#) on human rights.

In addition, some Member Organization representatives reported on human rights activities that they individually have carried out: **Gabriel Twose** (Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues) is co-editing a special issue on psychology and human rights for *The Journal of Peace Psychology*; **Bruce Friesen** (Sociologists Without Borders) organized a human rights think tank on his campus that included a human rights conference and interdisciplinary dialogue.

Progress Reports: Joint Initiative - Report to the United Nations

Jessica Wyndham (AAAS Scientific Responsibility Human Rights and Law Program) explained that members were presented with a preliminary draft of the report to the United Nations that contains an analysis of the focus group discussions. The draft is not complete, but she and **Margaret Weigers Vitullo** (American Sociological Association) invite feedback on the approach, structure and content of the report. Wyndham reminded members that a primary aim of the Coalition's process is to encourage the relevant UN Committee to adopt a formal statement on the meaning of the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress, called a General Comment. Wyndham noted that the draft report is structured like a General Comment. The plan is to present the report at an October conference on Article 15 being organized by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. In response to a question, Wyndham explained that the Committee is comprised of human rights practitioners, ethicists, lawyers, and some scientists, primarily social scientists. Vitullo asked specifically for feedback on any shortcomings or concerns about the draft.

Toni Carbo (Association for Information and Science Technology) emphasized that the draft should include a clear upfront statement about the limitations of the knowledge that can be gained from the focus groups (e.g., US-only audience, few women, lack of discipline diversity). This is important, she explained, so that the Committee members do not dismiss the contents of the report based on the methodology. Carbo offered to put the Coalition in touch with her colleagues in UNESCO's Information for All Programme. She concluded by saying that anything that might provide a target and excuse for dismissing the report should be avoided. She specifically suggested including the two sentences from Vitullo's presentation concerning limitations.

Felice Levine (American Educational Research Association) stated that the methods do not require the same level of elaboration as they would if aimed at a scientific audience. She suggested that it would be important to capture the nature of what we have learned through this information discovery process and how it informs what we want to say.

Alyson Reed (Linguistic Society of America) asked members to consider what we, as a Coalition, think Article 15 means and what we want the UN to do. She suggested that the Coalition could have that discussion leading to a statement of what the Coalition believes the right to mean that is not limited to what arose in the focus groups. **Jeff Toney** (Sigma Xi) commented that the report should make clear that each of the focus groups is representative of a broader number of members within each discipline/society.

David Burns (National Center for Science and Civic Engagement) added that the focus groups were almost a check on the Council's thoughts about Article 15 and that we should not be limited to the 'n' of 15 focus groups. He also added that the scale of the report needed to be rethought because it is too long. He asked what a successful meeting in October would look like. Wyndham explained that a successful outcome would entail an indication from Committee members that it was practical and reasonable to move towards drafting a General Comment. Wyndham noted that Committee members had said that a lack of information about state practice and general discourse about the right had been the primary reasons that a General Comment had not yet been written.

Mel Nathanson (American Mathematical Society) enquired whether the European Union has a position on Article 15, to which Wyndham replied that it does not. **Bruce Friesen** (Sociologists Without Borders) suggested that the report use a universal language to describe science as a process that is embedded in human experience. Further, he recommended defining science on a continuum so that it is relatable to a broader audience and to avoid the 'artificial distinction' between western scientific ways of knowing and traditional knowledge.

What are the next steps? First, Vitullo and Wyndham need to complete the focus group analysis, which will likely occur by the first week of September. Second, the Council needs to determine how to use the knowledge that members have gained from involvement with the Coalition and the distillation of the focus groups. A discussion followed about what should be the product or products presented to the UN at the meeting in October, whether the analysis of the focus groups as is currently being drafted by Vitullo and Wyndham, a statement by the Coalition, a set of recommendations, and/or a draft General Comment.

Susan Hinkins (American Statistical Association) reminded members that the Coalition Council agreed that it would not make statements or recommendations as a whole unless all of the members and affiliated organizations including AAAS agree. **Toni Carbo** (Association for Information and Science Technology) suggested the report needed to go beyond the focus group findings to include the rest of the Coalition activities related to Article 15, including the questionnaire on the responsibilities of scientists and engineers. **Janet Stocks** (Council on Undergraduate Research) suggested that the report is focusing too much on the substance of how we go to what we want to say rather than the important principles and concepts we want the UN to take into account such as the continuum of access.

Mark Frankel (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) suggested including a statement that acknowledges that the report reflects a broader scope of views and input than the information deduced from the focus groups. Wyndham added that when the Coalition began all five working groups were supposed to contribute to this process, but they have not all worked apace. That said, we could include mention of those ongoing activities in the report. Wyndham agreed to send a sample General Comment to Council members.

Vitullo commented that members were not doing justice to the value of the focus group data. Scientists have helped the Coalition to understand what Article 15 means, and with this wealth of empirical data hopefully the Committee can operationalize it. Levine recommended leading with the focus group data for October and following with the Coalition's efforts.

Members agreed to move forward with the report of the focus groups for October and to determine after that meeting what would be the most effective means of continued engagement by the Coalition and the products that should be developed.

Progress Reports: Areas of Work

Welfare of Scientists: **Juan Gallardo** (American Physical Society) reported that this working group has a first draft of a report on academic freedom online, which it will continue to develop. The group is reviewing a memo on the mechanisms for using Article 15 to protect the rights of individual scientists through international and regional human rights petition processes. The group has also created an online tool to facilitate ongoing collection of information regarding individual cases so this information can be shared efficiently with all members at Coalition meetings. Coalition members were invited to suggest organizations that would be interested in joining the ACS Network for disseminating information concerning individual cases. **Michele Irwin** (American Physical Society) invited Coalition members to share statements their organizations have made regarding boycotts of scientific meetings with her. She is collecting these on behalf of the working group so they can be listed in a single document.

Ethics and Human Rights: **Mark Frankel** (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) described the working group's project on the social responsibility of scientists and engineers, which has centered around a questionnaire aimed at eliciting the views of scientists and engineers regarding their responsibilities beyond their professional role as scientists and engineers to society more broadly. About 2,500 responses have been received since the questionnaire was circulated in May. Approximately one-third of those are from outside the United States. The aim of this collaboration between the AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program and the working group is to gather the first empirical data about how scientists and engineers view their responsibilities. The findings will be documented in a publicly accessible report and should inform the ongoing work to define Article 15. **Felice Levine** (American Educational Research Associates) noted that the Singapore Statement might be informative to this final report, and maybe also the Montreal Statement when it comes out. Frankel and Wyndham agreed to circulate those statements to the Council members.

Service to the STEM Community: **Margaret Weigers Vitullo** (American Sociological Association) explained that, in addition to the ongoing focus group analysis, the group is developing a template outline for webinars that would be made available for Coalition member organizations, and would complement the group's [Starter Kit](#) (an early working group project published some time ago). The template is based on a pilot webinar presented by Jessica Wyndham (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) with the American Society of Civil Engineers). Another subcommittee is now reviewing and evaluating the Starter Kit, as well as identifying effective means for dissemination.

Service to the Human Rights Community: **Susan Hinkins** (American Statistical Association) said the group has organized two workshops aimed at bridging scientists and scientific methods and human rights organizations. The workshops serve as a vehicle to let human rights organizations know that there are resources and volunteers available to help them, including through the [AAAS On-call Scientist initiative](#). When the working group met earlier in the day, **Brian Gran** (American Sociological Association) explained that he is leading the group's Joint Initiative efforts, which involve analyzing data sets to identify indicators for measuring compliance with Article 15. Two students are working with Ali Arab (Affiliated Individual) to analyze the data.

Education and Information Resources: **David Burns** (National Center for Science and Civic Engagement) explained that the group has reviewed the bibliographies that were last compiled in 2009. They have begun the process of updating the bibliographies according to discipline and intend to designate a curator to edit the annotations for each discipline. Areas in which there are current gaps include anthropology, political science and biology. Burns encouraged Council members to invite prospective member organizations to submit bibliographic information as a "point of entry" to invite them to the Coalition. The group also has adopted a template for its modules for introducing human rights into university science and engineering courses. One group member, Jennifer Bronson, was thanked for drafting a module on human rights for high school science classes. The group is working with her to strengthen the draft and she is going to try to pilot it in DC high schools. The National Center for Science and Civic Engagement plans to publish an article on human rights written by working group co-chair **Sam MacFarland** (Affiliated Individual). The group also reviewed a background article by MacFarland on "science as a human right."

Outreach and Communications Committee: **Jeffrey Toney** (Sigma Xi) noted that the Coalition has now implemented the student delegate position and the Committee is working on identifying additional ways to engage

students in the Coalition's activities. During its meeting, the Committee focused on areas where more representation is needed (engineering, medical sciences, physical sciences, economics) and discussed ways to approach organizations that represent these disciplines.

Broader Impacts: Science Funding for Human Rights

Jessica Wyndham (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) reminded the Council of action taken at the January meeting to encourage greater research and development funding for human rights-related research, and provided an update on the progress made to date. Working with Karen Oates (National Center for Science and Civic Engagement), the Secretariat and interns have conducted an analysis of existing National Science Foundation funding for human rights projects. This information was presented to the Coalition Steering Committee at their last meeting. It was agreed that, given the current political climate and sensitivities regarding funding for the social sciences, the most effective first step would be to engage directly the primary program officers responsible for management of human rights-related grants.

Proposals: Funding for the AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition

Jessica Wyndham (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) reminded members that at its last meeting, Council agreed to form an *ad hoc* committee to consider options for funding Coalition activities. Given time restrictions, Wyndham highlighted two of the four proposals for fundraising in the agenda materials for their consideration: meeting registration fees; and membership dues.

Meeting registration fees

Wyndham explained that, when given the option, some people are making donations to the Coalition. For example, for this meeting \$1275 was donated through individual registrations. This support, when combined with sponsorship from member organizations, helps cover meeting costs though it seldom covers all costs. Members expressed support for the introduction of meeting registration fees. There was no dissent.

In deciding the amount of the fees to be charged, members agreed that the Secretariat could be tasked with determining those details. Some suggestions were made as follows: **Alyson Reed** (Linguistic Society of America) suggested standardized fees but with no or low student fees. She also suggested instituting a waiver process for those for whom the registration fees were prohibitive of them attending the meeting. **Oliver Moles** (on behalf of Capital Area Social Psychological Association) suggested indicating on the registration site what it is that the fees cover. **Felice Levine** (American Educational Research Association) said that institutions and organizations should be encouraged to support students to attend the meeting. In addition, the suggestion was made to consider allowing for donations that could be made above the standard registration fee.

Toni Carbo put the motion to introduce registration fees with the possibility of a waiver. The motion was seconded by Brian Gran and passed unanimously.

Membership dues

Wyndham explained the financial reasons for introducing membership dues and laid out the pros and cons associated with doing so, including that it could change the relationship between members and the Secretariat in a positive way, increase engagement in the Coalition and clarify the benefits of membership. At the same time, some current members may not be able to convince their organizations to continue if fees are required, and it may prevent new organizations from joining. In addition, there are some issues AAAS would need to consider in order to implement fees if the Council agreed to move forward.

In response to a question concerning the financial needs of the Coalition, Wyndham explained that the current annual budget is approximately \$150,000, much of which is staff time, but that a larger budget of approximately \$260,000• would be needed to enable the Coalition to effectively implement its Plan of Action. For example,

increased funding would allow remote participation in the meetings and robust support for the working group projects.

Alyson Reed (Linguistic Society of America) asked about the kind of accountability there would be for the Secretariat staff and the role of the Coalition in setting the scope of their work. She suggested that if the Coalition is, in practice, paying staff salaries, then there would be a different dynamic for accountability and staff time. Would the Coalition members have a role in hiring? In reviewing performance evaluations? **Mark Frankel** (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law) agreed that the Secretariat would have a new line of accountability to the Coalition, but he did not envision any formal authority in hiring/firing of staff.

Felice Levine (American Educational Research Association) suggested that it would be a more comfortable model to pay dues as an affiliate of AAAS than paying dues to the Coalition itself. To do otherwise, might lead to the creation of an organization within an organization. **Margaret Weigers Vitullo** (American Sociological Association) suggested looking at the different models that exist, for example, COSSA. She asked whether the Coalition should be a separate operation? Should it be in AAAS? Felice suggested addressing the question in the short term (contributions rather than dues that help ease the burden on AAAS) and looking at long term structural issues separately. She also asked whether the Coalition might receive funding through the National Science Foundation.

Members agreed to the following questions for investigation by the Secretariat, for reporting at the next Council meeting:

- Consideration of lines of authority and accountability if dues are introduced;
- Articulation of how specific societies benefit from the Coalition;
- Specification on the range of dues.

Other Business and Public Comment

With the departure of Liezl Perez from the American Chemical Society, a vacancy has opened up for a Member-at-Large on the Steering Committee. Current Members-at-Large are: Michele Irwin, American Physical Society; Karen Oates, National Center for Science and Civic Engagement; and David Proctor, Affiliated Individual. Any member or affiliated organization representative can nominate another Coalition member (whether an organizational representative of affiliated individual). Wyndham will soon send members a call for nominees for this open position.

Meeting Attendees

Mark Alber	American Mathematical Society
David Burns	National Center for Science and Civic Engagement
Toni Carbo	Association for Information Science and Technology
Clifford Duke	Ecological Society of America
Bruce Friesen	Sociologists Without Borders
Juan Gallardo	American Physical Society
Brian Gran	American Sociological Association
Mary Gray	American Statistical Association
Susan Hinkins	American Statistical Association
Brad Holbrook	American Orthopsychiatric Association
Michele Irwin	American Physical Society
Felice Levine	American Educational Research Association
Melvyn Nathanson	American Mathematical Society
Alyson Reed	Linguistic Society of America
Janet Stocks	Council on Undergraduate Research
Jeffrey Toney	Sigma Xi
Margaret Weigers Vitullo	American Sociological Association

AAAS Staff:

Rebecca Carlson	AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program
Mark Frankel	AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program
Theresa Harris	AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program
Jessica Wyndham (Coalition Coordinator)	AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program