



# **AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition**

## **Ad Hoc Council Meeting Report**

**May 4, 2012**

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## Welcome, Introductions, and Meeting Objectives

**Jessica Wyndham** (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 draft Plan of Action 2012-2014 in light of the mission for the Coalition and the findings of the Coalition evaluation process conducted in 2011; and (b) to identify the next steps in finalizing the Plan of Action 2012-2014 to be adopted by the Council at its meeting on July 16, 2012.

Below is a summary of the comments made with regard to the draft Plan of Action.

## Vision and Goals

**Constance Thompson** (American Society of Civil Engineers) made the observation that the language of the draft Plan of Action overall needed to better integrate engineering. Another member pointed out the value of clearly defining what is meant by ‘International Bill or Rights.’

**Margaret Vitullo** (American Sociological Association) initiated a rich discussion about the relationship among the mission, vision and goals, with the following general points of consensus among meeting participants:

- the vision should be more concise;
- while there was general consensus about the content of the vision and goals, members recommended that they be amended to indicate clearly how the Coalition, through its activities, will impact society and human rights;
- the goals should be amended to read less like activities;
- given that the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress is directly connected to the mission and goals of the Coalition, Article 15 should be referenced in the vision and/or goals as articulated in the Plan of Action.

## Joint Initiative

**Jessica Wyndham** (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) explained that the Joint Initiative (Article 15) is an umbrella project of the Coalition to which all working groups and committees are contributing. After a review of the Joint Initiative activities planned for 2012-2014, **Rob Albro** (American Anthropological Association) recommended that the Joint Initiative be referenced in the context of the ongoing United Nations process to define and apply the right. **Art Kendall** (Capital Area Social Psychological Association) recommended clarifying the ‘Article 15’ reference in the heading.

## Areas of Work

**Margaret Vitullo** (American Sociological Association) opened the discussion by asking about the motivation of members to participate in the work of the Coalition. Vitullo suggested that if we can more explicitly tie the Coalition's activities to what individuals do in their work, then we may encourage greater participation and engagement. Other members explained their motivation for participating, including identifying and solving a particular problem, achieving tangible and important outcomes that improve the human rights situation, making a difference with whatever tools necessary, enjoyment of the activities, participation in a broader conversation about human rights on an interdisciplinary basis.

In order to address these various motivations through the area of work plans of action, members recommended the following:

- each working group and committee should identify the specific problem or problems they are aiming to address;
- each working group and committee should articulate how they will measure impact (in a way that may be qualitative rather than quantitative);
- each year the Coalition should work towards one "big" and "bold" event that has measurable outcome, for example, a human rights day event, a briefing, or United Nations event related to Article 15 (**Constance Thompson** (American Society of Civil Engineers) and **Rob Albro** (American Anthropological Association) agreed to work with the Secretariat in suggesting potential events for 2012)

In addition, **Michele Irwin** (American Physical Society) said it was important to accept that the working group plans of action are flexible and must be adaptable to changing circumstances over the next three years. She recommended developing a table to goals and activities, visually mapping how the activities of the group contribute to achieving the Coalition's overall goals. Such a mapping exercise will facilitate the process of determining whether new activities are consistent with the Coalition's goals and whether activities that are not moving forward will impact the ability of the Coalition to achieve its goals.

## Benchmarks

**Jessica Wyndham** (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) notes that the benchmarks are intended to be broad and include individual members as well as member and affiliated societies. She added that work needs to be done to improve the current benchmark data collection mechanisms to ensure that members understand the value of providing data on their activities and provide it to the Secretariat.

**Jancis Long** (Psychologists for Social Responsibility) suggests including impact-related questions in the benchmarks. She also recommended asking member and affiliated societies and individuals to provide more explicit examples for their benchmark reports,

rather than just asking them to “check the box.” Although the benchmarks are predominantly quantitative, **Wyndham** suggested that there could be additional built-in benchmarks for the working groups, specifically aimed at the question of how they would measure the impacts of their work. **Rob Albro** (American Anthropological Association) added that at the outset of a project, working groups should be encouraged to articulate the standards that they will use to measure both the outcomes and the impacts.

In response to a suggestion that association representatives should be assisted in their function as ‘hubs’ for human rights within their association, **Doug Richardson** (Association of American Geographers) suggested that member representatives be encouraged to start a human rights interest group within their societies. This group could then have the role of finding out what human rights work is being done.

**Margaret Vitullo** (American Sociological Association) proposed offering associations a special designation that they would qualify for on the basis of achieving benchmarks. This, she added, would serve as a built in motivator for the associations. **Clinton Anderson** (American Psychological Association) expressed hesitancy about offering such a certification. He proposed presenting a yearly award in recognition of improved or expanded human rights achievements. This award would not be about participation in the Coalition, but about the work that has been done within the individual society or association.

**Mark Frankel** (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) recommended that, when it is time to start compiling benchmark data, individuals be contacted by phone (as opposed to by email) and asked to gather the information from their society.

## Governance

**Margaret Vitullo** (American Sociological Association) suggested that the section on the Steering Committee include a list of current members. **Clinton Anderson** (American Psychological Association) recommended that an evaluation component should be incorporated into the plans for the council, steering committee, and secretariat. He also emphasized the importance of making the role of the council more clear and functional as the Coalition moves forward. To that end, **Cliff Duke** (Ecological Society of America) proposed that all council meetings be made virtual so as to increase attendance from outside members. **Jessica Wyndham** (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) said that staff would look further into the feasibility of holding virtual meetings.

## **Next Steps**

Members agreed to the following next steps:

- Send draft Plan of Action to all Affiliates and Affiliated Individuals for their comments and input;
- Send the draft to select human rights organizations for their feedback, clarifying what will be done with the feedback that is given;
- Once the Plan of Action is adopted, conduct outreach to and engage non-member associations.

## **New Member Requests**

Members agreed that the Secretariat should contact all Council members by email to solicit their opinion on whether the two organizations from which we have received membership requests meet existing membership requirements. If it is decided that the pending requests do not meet requirements, Council will be asked at the July 16, 2012 meeting to consider whether an evaluation of membership categories should take place to include, for example, ‘friends of the Coalition’ for organizations that do not meet current membership requirements.

## Appendix: Meeting Attendees

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	<b>Representative</b>	<b>Organization</b>
1.	Rob Albro	American Anthropological Association
2.	Clinton Anderson	American Psychological Association
3.	Clifford Duke	Ecological Society of America
4.	Alex Ingrams	Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues
5.	Michele Irwin	American Physical Society
6.	Art Kendall	Capital Area Social Psychological Association
7.	Jancis Long	Psychologists for Social Responsibility
8.	Megan Overbey	Association of American Geographers
9.	Steve Pierson	American Statistical Association
10.	Doug Richardson	Association of American Geographers
11.	Constance Thompson	American Society of Civil Engineers
12.	Margaret Wieggers Vitullo	American Sociological Association

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

Rebecca Carlson, Program Assistant

Mark Frankel, Director

Jessica Wyndham, Associate Director and Coalition Coordinator