



AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition

Council Meeting Report

July 14, 2011

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Welcome, Introductions, and Meeting Objectives

Mark S. Frankel, Director of the Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program opened the meeting by highlighting the opportunities arising from the merger of the AAAS Science and Human Rights Program and the Scientific Freedom, Responsibility and Law Program. Frankel invited the Council to provide input to the new Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program on how to most effectively address the combined elements of the New Program.

Jessica Wyndham (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program and Coalition Coordinator) welcomed Council members before providing a brief overview of the progress made in the past year. She noted that in the past year: the Society of the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI) joined the Coalition and several organizations worked together in addressing issues of mutual concern (e.g., the American Sociological Association and the Ecological Society of America together wrote to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights requesting a hearing on the right to water). Wyndham added that several associations have also worked closely with AAAS in bringing human rights to their members. For example, the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, the American Psychological Association, SPSSI, and the Capital Area Social Psychology Association have encouraged their members to join AAAS's "On-call" Scientists program and contribute their skills for human rights purposes. As a result, in the month leading up to the Council meeting, 48 new psychologists and physicians and over twenty new forensic experts registered to volunteer.

Within the Coalition itself, further progress has also been made, including: the completion of a tool to assist professional societies expand their human rights activities; the completion of a draft white paper on the connections between and among science, ethics and human rights; significant progress on a guide to assist scientific and engineering associations respond to threats and persecution of members of their discipline; a long-term project has begun to develop human rights modules for STEM curricula; and a focus group-based process has been designed and begun to engage all Coalition members in an effort to define and identify barriers to the realization of the right to "enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications."

Following introductions by each of the Council members, Wyndham explained the meeting objectives: (1) to review progress in engaging scientific and engineering associations in human rights, and bringing human rights to their membership; (2) to assess progress in the implementation of the Joint Initiative; (3) to consider an outreach strategy for engaging students and underrepresented disciplines and fields of practice in the Coalition's activities; and (4) to initiate an evaluative and planning process aimed at setting an ambitious agenda for the Coalition in 2012-2014.

Council Meeting 2010: Report and Follow-up

The Coalition Council met for the second time in July 2010. **Susan Hinkins** (American Statistical Association) presented the report of that Meeting which was adopted by the Council without amendment. Hinkins then introduced the recommendations made by the Steering Committee in follow-up to Council's request to develop a tenure policy for Steering Committee members and Working Group Chairs.

Hinkins introduced a Tenure and Selection Process proposed by the Steering Committee (see **Appendix 2**) and highlighted some of the new elements introduced by the Process which include:

- Steering Committee members will serve a term of 3 years;
- "Members-at-Large" (5) will be nominated by member and affiliated organizations to form part of the Steering Committee; and
- Working Group co-chairs will serve a term of 2 years.

Council agreed to the Proposed Tenure and Selection Process.

Highlight: Members Addressing Human Rights

Clinton Anderson (American Psychological Association) invited members to share what they have been doing in the field of human rights and to identify where they may be facing challenges in their activities.

- **American Anthropological Association:** the Association has moved to put breaks on the letter writing activities of the Committee on Human Rights, partly because of the challenges associated with verifying reports of human rights abuses against anthropologists (**Michele Irwin** of the American Physical Society remarked that their committee faces similar challenges, which they address by seeking as many sources as possible to corroborate reports of abuse).
- **American Society of Civil Engineers:** a webinar was held in June on the topic of "Civil Engineering and Human Rights: What's the connection?", with 213 ASCE members registering for the webinar and 81 participating live. In response to a poll, over 90% of participants said they saw a connection between civil engineering and human rights, and 16 participants completed a survey on Article 15 as follow-up to the webinar.
- **Society for Research in Child Development:** the Society has just formed a Committee on Equity and Justice which was originally intended to protect children from atrocities but in practice is addressing children's rights more broadly.
- **Ecological Society of America:** to demonstrate how ecology impacts humans, the Society is hosting a series of sessions at its Annual Meeting related to human rights, including a session focused on engaging communities and regional decision makers. They will also host an Article 15 focus group.

Angel Colon-Rivera (Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues) remarked on the value of being able to refer to scientific literature to make a case for human rights. He suggested the Coalition could serve as a forum for exchanging ideas and sharing resources that would support and strengthen human rights arguments based on scientific data. The existing Council listserv could be used to share information of this sort.

Finally, **Jessica Wyndham** (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) encouraged all Council members to complete the human rights survey that is distributed annually to all Coalition members as a means of learning about their ongoing human rights activities. This information is important as a way to identify and measure progress and impact.

Programs: Areas of Activity Progress Reports

The Coalition's programmatic work is carried out along two parallel tracks: five specialized areas of activity and an overarching initiative. The co-chairs of each of the five areas of activity working groups highlighted the progress their group had made in the previous year.

Welfare of Scientists: **Michele Irwin** (American Physical Society) introduced two activities of the working group (1) an online network hosted by the American Chemical Society and used to post action alerts, reports and articles relevant to the welfare of scientists; and (2) a guide to assist scientific and engineering associations address threats to colleagues, including information about why this work is important, the types of human rights violations suffered by scientists and engineers, actions that associations may take on their behalf, and helpful resources.

Science Ethics and Human Rights: **Jessica Wyndham** (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) spoke on behalf of Co-Chair **Rob Albro** (American Anthropological Association) and introduced the draft Executive Summary of a white paper prepared by the working group to address the intersections between and among science, ethics and human rights with particular focus on human subjects protections. **Clinton Anderson** (American Psychological Association) suggested sharing the document with association ethics committees for comment and as a resource. **Meggan Maughan-Brown** (American Society of Civil Engineers) noted the complete absence of engineering concerns in the draft and suggested that thought be given to finding links with the engineering community. **Margaret Wieggers Vitullo** (American Sociological Association) suggested that the document be circulated within organizations that deal directly with Internal Review Boards and the Consortium of Social Science Associations. Finally, **Lonnie Sherrod** (Society for Research in Child Development) suggested sharing the document with members of the international research community.

Service to the Scientific Community: **Margaret Wieggers Vitullo** (American Sociological Association) highlighted two activities of the working group (1) a "Starter Kit" to assist associations interested in becoming involved in or expanding their human rights-related

activities; and (2) an extensive effort in support of the Coalition’s Joint Initiative aimed at engaging scientists and engineers in the process of defining the right to “enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications.” Three focus groups have been held so far, and almost twenty Coalition members have expressed interest in organizing a focus group. To facilitate the involvement of as many associations as possible, the working group is developing materials that associations can use to host their own focus group without the need for in-person working group or AAAS participation.

Service to the Human Rights Community: **Susan Hinkins** (American Statistical Association) described the working group’s three ongoing projects: (1) guidelines to facilitate collaborative partnerships between scientists and human rights organizations (draft guidelines will be presented for feedback at a meeting of Physicians for Human Rights); (2) clinics bringing together human rights organizations and a panel of scientists and/or engineers to identify the technical assistance that could be provided to support the organization’s work (focus is currently being given to finding organizations in the New York City area); and (3) a green paper aimed at identifying indicators by which to measure government compliance with their obligations to realize the right to “enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications.”

Education and Information Resources: **Jeff Toney** (Sigma Xi) explained that, building on the compilation of science and human rights literature as well as course syllabi that are available on the Coalition website, the group has shifted focus to the development of teaching modules on human rights for incorporation into STEM curricular at the undergraduate level. **Paula Skedsvold** (Federation of Associations in Brain and Behavioral Sciences) suggested capitalizing on the administration’s interest in STEM education by expanding the scope of this work to include K-12 classes. **George Middendorf** (Ecological Society of America) identified a further useful tool which the working group could develop, guidelines on how to work with communities from a human rights perspective.

Programs: Joint Initiative

In addition to the five working groups that engage member associations in the pursuit of specified areas of activity, the Coalition is committed to pursuing an overarching initiative that engages the full membership. The human right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress (Article 15, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) was chosen as the focus of the Joint Initiative.

Jessica Wyndham (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) said, “the last six months have clearly demonstrated just how much interest there is among our members in Article 15, and in bringing the perspectives of the scientific and engineering communities to the UN process of defining and applying this right.” Involving many members of the Coalition, a focus group-based process was designed as a mechanism for learning from members what the right to benefit from scientific progress means for their discipline.

Over twenty members have indicated an interest in being a part of this process, with three focus groups held so far and a further eight scheduled between now and October. “The beauty of the focus groups,” Wyndham said, “is that they serve multiple purposes.” The focus groups are a way to elicit feedback about Article 15; they are a mechanism for educating members and the leadership of participating organizations about the association’s involvement in the Coalition; they serve to build a cadre of individuals interested in the connections between their discipline and human rights; and they are helpful as a way of identifying entry points for strengthening the human rights activities of the organization.”

In addition to focus groups, other methods of engaging association members have been adopted: the Linguistics Society of America posted the focus group questions on a blog, though few responses were received; the American Society of Civil Engineers distributed a questionnaire to the participants in its webinar and 16 people responded; and the SPSSI has developed a draft guide to assist associations to use Article 15 as the basis for action at the international and regional levels in support of the rights of scientists. SPSSI is also in the process of developing a draft resolution on the right for potential adoption by the UN Human Rights Council.

Finally, Wyndham explained the next steps in the Coalition’s Joint Initiative. In early 2012, an independent expert of the United Nations human rights system will be presenting to the Human Rights Council a report on the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress. The preparation of the report and its review each present opportunities for the Coalition to provide input. Consideration by the Human Rights Council of an expert report on the right can also be capitalized on as impetus for continued attention to this right within the United Nations human rights system. Specifically, the Coalition will work towards encouraging the Committee responsible for monitoring the treaty in which the right exists to develop an authoritative definition of the right, known as a ‘General Comment.’

Membership and Outreach

David Proctor (Affiliated Scientist) opened by giving the floor to **Constance Thompson** (American Society of Civil Engineers), who presented a proposal to amend the language of the Coalition’s Foundational Documents to broaden the reach of the Coalition beyond ‘scientists’ to include engineers and health professionals. Thompson explained that, as a representative of the ASCE in the Coalition, she was aware that engineers were welcomed as part of the Coalition. However, she explained, as the Coalition continues to struggle to attract more engineering societies as well as societies from the life and physical sciences, amending the language to be more inclusive would be helpful. *A motion was put and adopted giving the Steering Committee the responsibility to amend the Foundational Documents to explicitly include the engineering community.*

Proctor then moved to the broader issue of member participation and the tools and opportunities that existed or should be created to encourage greater participation. Shared

resources and tools discussed included: a system for interacting and collaborating online (e.g., basecamp, team-site, google docs, and drop box); an online calendar; contact list; shared document capability; and online library. Members emphasized the utility of email integrated systems. Proctor explained that the Coalition is already on Twitter and LinkedIn.

Finally, Proctor addressed the recurring suggestion of reaching out to students to encourage their greater participation in the Coalition. Ideas for engaging students included reaching out to the student chapters of member and affiliated organizations, as well as conducting direct outreach to universities.

The Membership and Outreach Committees of the Coalition do not currently have members, although several individual members of the Coalition have given significant time to outreach efforts. Proctor encouraged members to join the Committees and contribute to expanding the impact of the Coalition.

Developing the Coalition Plan of Action (2012-2014)

At the first meeting of the Coalition Council in July 2009, Council adopted a Plan of Action (2009-2011). **Jessica Wyndham** (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) said that she “has been so inspired by the many associations and individuals who have worked hard to implement that Plan.” “At the same time,” she said, “we have fallen short in meeting some of the goals and intentions of the initial Plan.” As the initial Plan of Action comes to an end, the opportunity now exists to reflect on what has worked well in the past three years, and shortfalls that need to be identified and addressed. Wyndham invited the Council to “determine an ambitious path forward that is directed at meeting the mission and goals of the Coalition, involves all our members, and will ensure the Coalition continues to grow in strength and impact.”

Wyndham presented a series of nine initial questions, developed by the Steering Committee, aimed at understanding the strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities that exist for the Coalition as viewed by members. These questions will form the basis for phone interviews with all Coalition member and affiliate organization representatives. In preparation for the interviews, all representatives were encouraged to seek the input of their association leadership, staff and members. Affiliated scientists will be engaged in this process through an online survey.

Clinton Anderson (American Psychological Association) emphasized the value of seeking input from their association colleagues in this Coalition evaluation and planning process. To that end, Anderson outlined the approach he was taking within the APA which involved placing an item on the agenda of each APA Committee and Board seeking specific input on their human rights-related activities and priorities.

As a means of providing immediate feedback and input, Council members were invited to discuss their response to the questions. Feedback received included:

Interdisciplinary approach: according to many Council members, one of the greatest benefits of the Coalition is its interdisciplinary character which facilitates the sharing of diverse perspectives and broad communication across fields while providing a common framework and language for discussion, the human rights framework.

Society and member engagement: the Coalition has provided the support, resources and impetus needed to start educating and engaging association members in human rights. Scientists and engineers have a social responsibility and member organizations can support their members in meeting that responsibility by raising awareness among their members of the connections between their discipline and human rights; and developing training on how to “conduct quality science” in a way consistent with human rights standards.

At the same time, Council members acknowledged the need for each association to engage its members more actively in the work of the Coalition and in the human rights activities of their association. Key to such engagement is being able to identify and clearly communicate the links between human rights and the discipline of a specific society. Specifically, **George Middendorf** (Ecological Society of America) spoke of the need to identify the connections between human rights and the life sciences and **Meggan Maughan-Brown** (American Society of Civil Engineers) encouraged associations to reach out to their student members to engage them in the association’s human rights activities.

Right to benefit from scientific progress: **Angel Rivera-Colon** (Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues) and **Lonnie Sherrod** (Society for Research in Child Development) both suggested that the right to benefit from scientific progress encapsulates the reasons for which scientists and engineers should become involved in human rights work and in the Coalition. Rivera-Colon added that science has come under greater scrutiny, and even attack, in recent years. This right provides a platform for giving voice to the importance and value of science for society.

Outreach: the value and impact of the Coalition is going to increase with an expansion in and diversification of members. **Gretchen Schafft** (American Anthropological Association) commented that the Coalition is “pale”, and **Meggan Maughan-Brown** (American Society of Civil Engineers) added that underrepresented ethnic groups should be more involved in the Coalition. Furthermore, a couple of members suggested a greater push should be made to internationalize the Coalition’s membership. Finally, **Jeff Toney** (Sigma Xi) suggested the Coalition should expand its outreach to the news media as a means of broadening its exposure generally.

Education: **Jeff Toney** (Sigma Xi) spoke to the particular value of using the resources and leverage of the Coalition to ensure education in human rights, not only for current members of scientific and engineering associations, but to upcoming members of the community by providing human rights education in schools and colleges.

Scholarly freedom: while emphasizing the value of the Coalition’s broad program of activities, several members spoke specifically of the continued need to address the individual concerns of persecuted scientists and engineers.

Barriers: lack of time to dedicate to Coalition activities was the most common barrier to participation in the Coalition. Related to the challenge of time was that several organizations, though they had chosen to join the Coalition, do not prioritize human rights in their work. Distance has also presented a challenge for associations unable to cover travel costs for their representatives and members to attend Coalition meetings.

Another important barrier for many representatives was the concern within their own organization that involvement in human rights implied activism, advocacy and/or political engagement, and that the association and its members should not be involved in such activities. While **Alyson Reed** (Linguistics Society of America), for example, suggested that the Coalition should be more action oriented, other representatives shared the concern of their colleagues that involvement in the Coalition could bind their association to “positions that would make the organization uncomfortable.” **Lonnie Sherrod** (Society for Research in Child Development) expressed his belief that the balance struck by the Coalition so far between “science and action” had been the right one.

Benchmarks: **Gretchen Schafft** (American Anthropological Association) and **Margaret Wieggers Vitullo** (American Sociological Association) both suggested that the Coalition benchmarks be revised. Schafft commented that the benchmarks should be “reevaluated to reflect the importance of real action ongoing in the associations.” Vitullo added that the unit of analysis for defining success needed to be clarified: is success defined as what is going on within individual associations? Or is success measured by whether scientists are becoming increasingly involved in human rights work?

Other Business

Jeffery Biggs (American Political Science Association) commended AAAS for gathering 142 signatories for a letter to members of the US House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations regarding potential defunding of the National Science Foundation’s Directorate of Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences. This, Biggs said, was a “huge inter-disciplinary success” and another demonstration, like that of the Coalition, of the value of bringing together associations from across the disciplines for a common cause.

Appendix 1: Meeting Attendees

Organization	Representative(s)
1. American Anthropological Association	Gretchen Schafft
2. American Educational Research Association	Christy Talbot
3. American Orthopsychiatric Association	Liepa Gust
4. American Physical Society	John Gillespie Michele Irwin
5. American Political Science Association	Jeffrey Biggs
6. American Psychological Association	Clinton Anderson
7. American Society of Civil Engineers	Meggan Maughan-Brown Constance Thompson
8. American Sociological Association	Brian Gran
9. American Statistical Association	Susan Hinkins Steve Pierson
10. Association of American Geographers	Megan Overbey
11. Ecological Society of America	Clifford Duke George Middendorf
12. Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences	Paula Skedsvold
13. Linguistic Society of America	Alyson Reed
14. Society for Research in Child Development	Lonnie Sherrod
15. Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues	Angel Colon-Rivera
16. Sociologists Without Borders	Bruce Friesen

Guest

David Proctor, Chair – Outreach Committee

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

Greg Barber, Intern

Rebecca Carlson, Program Assistant

Mark Frankel, Director

Jessica Wyndham, Associate Director and Coalition Coordinator

Appendix 2: Proposed Tenure, Selection and Transition Processes

Steering Committee

Term Length and Limits:

Term Length	Members: 3 years, staggered Chair: 2 years
Term Limits	2 consecutive terms followed by mandatory 1-year absence

Composition and Selection:

Number	12 member representatives (i.e., members of Council) plus staff member
Composition	Coordinator SHRP staff member (1) Working group Co-Chairs and Committee Chairs (1 each, up to 8 total) “ Members-at-Large ” selected from general membership to complete a total of 12 members
Selection	Working group and committee members elected by respective working group/committee At-large membership nominated by member and affiliate organizations, selected by Steering Committee
Approval	Approved by Council

Exception to Composition:

In the event that a Working Group or Committee has only one Chair and that individual is not a member representative, s/he will be allowed to serve on the Steering Committee until the appointment of a member representative.

Terms:

Official terms begin and end at the Council Meeting of that particular year (currently July).

Mid-term Resignations:

In the event a Steering Committee member resigns mid-term, an interim member may be appointed in accordance with the Composition and Selection rules (above). This successor will serve the remainder of the original term, requiring Council approval *if* the term endures past the next Council meeting.

Mid-term Appointments:

In the event a member association appoints their representatives at times that do not coincide with Steering Committee appointments, the ex-officio member will be allowed to serve until the next Council meeting.

Working Group Co-Chairs and Committee Chairs

Term Length and Limits:

Term Length	Fixed term of 2 years
Term Limits	<p>Maximum of 6 years for one Working Group or Committee. For example, a person could be Co-Chair of one group for 6 years and another group for 6 years.</p> <p>Exceptions to the maximum require Council or Steering Committee approval</p>

Composition and Selection:

Number	<p>Working Groups: At least 2 Co-Chairs, more at the discretion of the working group</p> <p>Committees: At least 1 Chair, more at the discretion of the working group</p>
Composition	At least one Co-Chair of each working group or committee must be the representative of a member organization (e.g., council member)
Selection	<p>Working Groups and Committees with fewer than 5 members: Co-Chairs and Chairs appointed by the Steering Committee after consultation with current Working Group and Committee members</p> <p>Working Groups and Committees with 5 or more members select Co-Chairs by election</p>
Approval	Approved by Steering Committee

Terms:

Official terms begin and end at the Council Meeting of that particular year (currently July).

Mid-term Resignations:

In the event a Working Group or Committee Chair resigns mid-term, an interim Chair may be appointed in accordance with the Composition and Selection rules (above). This successor will serve the remainder of the original term. If the term endures past the next Steering Committee/Council meeting, the appointment will require Steering Committee/Council approval.

Appendix 3: Baseline and Benchmark Data (2011)

Benchmark Data is collected through online research by AAAS and by corroboration of voluntary reporting by Coalition members and AAAS affiliates. The data from any year may differ from previous reports on account of new data becoming available. As a result, updates may include changes to historical data as well as current data.

		2008	2009	2010	2011*
1. Human Rights Committees, Sections or Working Groups	Coalition Member and Affiliate Associations	12	12	12	12
	AAAS Affiliates	5	5	5	5
2. Issue Statements or Resolutions on Human Rights	Coalition Member and Affiliate Associations	3	4	2	3
	AAAS Affiliates	0	1	1	0
3. Research on Human Rights Issues	Coalition Member and Affiliate Associations	0	4	0	0
	AAAS Affiliates	0	0	0	0
4. Work on Protection of Scientists	Coalition Member and Affiliate Associations	5	6	8	5
	AAAS Affiliates	4	5	5	4
5. Educational Programs on Human Rights for their Members	Coalition Member and Affiliate Associations	1	6	7	5
	AAAS Affiliates	1	5	5	1
6. Public Education Programs on Human Rights and their Discipline	Coalition Member and Affiliate Associations	0	0	2	1
	AAAS Affiliates	0	0	2	1
7. Award Prizes for Upholding Human Rights	Coalition Member and Affiliate Associations	4	5	6	2
	AAAS Affiliates	3	3	2	0
8. Application of Discipline-specific Knowledge & Skills to Human Rights	Coalition Member and Affiliate Associations	0	1	1	14
	AAAS Affiliates	0	0	1	2
9. Pro-Bono Program for Human Rights Groups	Coalition Member and Affiliate Associations	1	1	1	1
	AAAS Affiliates	0	0	0	0
10. Human Rights in their Code of Ethics	Coalition Member and Affiliate Associations	5	5	5	5
	AAAS Affiliates	5	7	7	7
11. Public Dissemination of Human Rights Resources & Publications	Coalition Member and Affiliate Associations	3	7	7	2
	AAAS Affiliates	0	4	0	0

*2011 numbers represent activities undertaken and foreshadowed for January – December 2011.