

International Agency for Research on Cancer



World Health
Organization

**Governing Council
Fifty-fifth Session**

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Auditorium

DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 49th SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

1. The Scientific Council provides evaluation and advice to the Director and the Governing Council on the Agency's scientific activities and overall strategy. On an *ad hoc* basis Scientific Council members also participate in working groups to provide advice to the Director on special projects; an example during the last year was the contribution of Dr Bettina Borisch to the discussion of the future plans for the WHO Classification of Tumours Series.
2. Dialogue between the Governing and Scientific Councils is promoted through regular teleconferences with the Director and by the presence of the Governing Council Chair and Vice-Chair at the Scientific Council and the Scientific Council Chair (Outgoing and Incoming) at the Governing Council.

The IARC Interim Annual Report 2012

3. The Director presented the Interim Annual Report, highlighting some of the major achievements and stressing the collaborative and inter-disciplinary nature of the research. The Director notes with satisfaction the congratulations of the Scientific Council on the impressive achievements over the last year.

Biennial Report of the IARC Ethics Committee

4. The report was presented by Dr Martyn Plummer. The Scientific Council emphasized the importance of the work on dealing with incidental findings. This is a challenge for all biomedical research comprising genome-wide association studies or whole genome sequencing and work is proceeding to provide an acceptable approach for the Agency's studies.

Director's response to the Reviews of the Sections of Cancer Information (CIN) and Environment and Radiation (ENV), held in January 2012

5. Both CIN and ENV were rated "outstanding" and a "perfect fit" to the Agency's mission. The discussion at the Scientific Council focused on actions taken subsequent to the review.

6. In relation to CIN, the Council made a number of comments about the Regional "Hubs" for cancer registration, which represent the main strategy for the Global Initiative on Cancer Registration in low- and middle-income countries (GICR). CIN has established a GICR Principal Investigators Group of leaders from each Hub chaired by the Deputy Section Head to ensure sharing of best practice, identification of research opportunities and advocacy for cancer registration in relation to national health authorities. A number of training activities are already being conducted through the auspices of the Hubs.

7. The Scientific Council remarked on the need for financing Hubs. Fund raising is underway in partnership with UICC, which has made the GICR one of its two main programmes for the World Cancer Leader's Summit 2013. In addition, IARC is working closely with the WHO Cluster on Noncommunicable Disease and Mental Health on resource mobilization for cancer registration, given cancer incidence is one of the indicators in the WHO Global Monitoring Framework on Noncommunicable Diseases.

Future directions for the Education and Training Group

8. The Education and Training Group (ETR) has been headed by Ms Anouk Berger since 21 May 2012. Ms Berger presented the past and future directions on this core area.

9. The Director welcomed the fact that the Scientific Council was pleased with the overall new direction of the ETR activities and initiatives. As requested, the Director will provide a biennial report to the Scientific Council.

10. The balance IARC takes of training individuals through fellowships, courses and workshops, and training initiatives at institutional level associated with collaborative research projects was noted as being important.

11. The interviews with post-doctoral scientists conducted in the context of the Postdoctoral Charter highlighted the appreciation of support received from the Agency and also the interest in the Association of Early Career Scientists, which has now been launched. This group, which is an initiative of both pre-doctoral and postdoctoral scientists and is managed by them, aims to provide more opportunities for social interaction, networking and career development for early career scientists at the Agency. The Agency will also explore its options to provide mentoring to early career scientists.

Proposed Programme (2014–2017) and Budget (2014–2015)

12. The Scientific Council recognized the financial challenges faced by the Agency and recommended the Governing Council to approve the 2014–2015 budget (see document GC/55/7).

13. The Scientific Council was satisfied that the current Medium-Term Strategy (2010–2014) could be extended for an additional year to permit some alignment with other IARC planning cycles. This topic is brought to the attention of the Governing Council in document GC/55/8.

Purchase of scientific equipment

14. The Scientific Council approved the suggested equipment purchases, which include replacement of a number of key items which are now obsolete. The Governing Council is asked to consider this recommendation in document GC/55/14D.

15. The Scientific Council once again highlighted the importance of reviewing IT needs when purchasing new scientific equipment. Some members of the Scientific Council noted that this advice was also emphasized during the Scientific Reviews of the two Sections. The Director welcomed these inputs and after careful review of the Agency's computing capacities decided to submit a request for funds from the Governing Council Special Fund to complement the current investments already being made from other available sources of funds in order to best meet the growing requirements (see document GC/55/14F).

Future Direction of the IARC Biobank

16. The availability of well-characterized biospecimens associated with studies from around the world is a key strength of the Agency. IARC is in the process of fully documenting these biospecimens and creating an integrated Biobank. In parallel, an Access Policy has been developed to encourage best use of these specimens in collaboration with scientists internationally.

17. The Scientific Council supported the vision of IARC to provide leadership in biobanking, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Following the Scientific Council recommendation, the Agency is conducting a survey to assess the possible requirements for IARC to act more systematically as custodian of biospecimens and to provide technical support to collaborators from LMICs. The Agency will work closely in conjunction with other partners in this regard, including the National Cancer Institute, Centre for Global Health, USA.

18. The project of a new IARC building is an opportunity to adequately plan for this key Biobank resource in the new construction. The Director will reflect in the future design the recommendations of the Scientific Council on the need to be more ambitious with regard to space; the benefits of a stand-alone building for the Biobank; automation of the Biobank processes; and back-up procedures through storage of samples off-site.

Building for the future: the scientific vision behind the "Nouveau Centre"

19. The Director noted the recognition from the Scientific Council that the principles outlined in document SC/49/11 for the "Nouveau Centre" (see document GC/55/9B) are consistent with the vision for the future activities of the Agency, including the requirement for adequate laboratory space.

20. The Director will take account of a number of recommendations from the Scientific Council in future discussions of the design of the "Nouveau Centre", notably to maintain maximum flexibility in any new building; to create an environment that maximizes collaboration across Sections; and to ensure an architectural impact consistent with the status, role and success of the Agency.

Current Scientific Initiatives

21. All scientific Sections, with the exception of the two Sections undergoing review, made a short presentation on current leading projects and outlined a number of key questions of their future strategy where they sought input from the members of the Council.

22. The Director was pleased with the excellent feedback this initiative elicited from the members of the Scientific Council and congratulates all the Group and Section Heads for the comments they received. A number of constructive suggestions were made in the Report from the Scientific Council and these will guide the Agency in the further development of the projects discussed.

Scientific Peer Review of the Sections of Early Detection and Prevention (EDP) and Nutrition and Metabolism (NME)

23. The Director welcomed the conclusions of the peer-review committees that both Sections were rated as "outstanding" and a "perfect fit" with the Agency's mission and strategy. Given the significant changes in both Sections in the recent years this represents an important endorsement of the current and planned activities.

24. The Director will review the overarching strategy of the EDP Section with senior colleagues, particularly given the opportunities for IARC in the area of implementation research. This review will include the succession planning for retirements, a consideration of the type of expertise required and the balance between in-house and external provision. The Director has invited a respected expert in this area, Professor David Hill from Cancer Council Victoria, to spend several months at IARC during 2013 working with EDP to provide support to this analysis.

25. The review panels made a number of specific recommendations to each of the Groups within the two Sections as they develop the focus and prioritization of the research based on their strengths and opportunities. These recommendations will inform future planning within both Sections as a whole and the development of collaborations with other IARC Sections.

26. The Director notes the encouragement to develop the work in LMICs as well as the support for an interdisciplinary approach in NME.

27. The Director will continue discussions with the WHO and other potential partners with regard to the customization of the dietary assessment tools developed by the DEX Group to applications in countries outside of Europe.

28. The Scientific Council made a recommendation that the Director approach the Governing Council for more resources for the EPIC project. Over the past four years the Director, together with colleagues in NME, has made efforts to identify voluntary contributions for EPIC infrastructure funding, with a notable success being the award of the BBMRI-Longitudinal Prospective Cohort Studies grant from the EC, and to manage costs, through the establishment of a business model for access to EPIC biospecimens and renegotiation of the contract for liquid nitrogen for the Biobank.

29. Given the demands on the Governing Council Special Fund, including support to the regular budget, the Director did not present a special request this year to the Governing Council for additional funding for EPIC. Alternative sources will be sought during 2013 and if unsuccessful the Director may return to the Governing Council at its 56th Session for their consideration of this area.

Changes to Scientific Council Sessions

30. In line with the recommendations of the Scientific Council, the Director will continue to schedule the peer-review meetings of the Sections immediately prior to the Scientific Council meeting.

31. The Director also welcomed the opportunity to work with the Scientific Council on an alternative scoring system for the peer review.