



DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 52nd SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

1. The 52nd Session of the IARC Scientific Council was held in Lyon on 27–29 January 2016. It was attended by the Chairperson of the Governing Council, Dr Mark Palmer. The participation of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Governing and Scientific Councils in regular joint teleconferences with the Director and the invitation of the Chairs to each other's Council sessions constitute an essential mechanism for promoting exchanges and coordination between the Councils.
2. The Scientific Council advises the Director and the Governing Council on the Agency's scientific direction and on the implementation of its programme, through the recommendations issued during its annual Session, through the participation of its members in the peer-review panels that regularly evaluate each of the scientific Groups, and in ad hoc advisory/working groups.
3. Topics covered elsewhere on the agenda of the Governing Council are not addressed in this document.

The IARC Biennial Report 2014–2015

4. The Director presented the Biennial Report highlighting some of the key new findings and research outcomes generated by the Agency. In the discussion that followed, the Scientific Council congratulated the Director and the Agency's staff on the quality of IARC's activities over the biennium.
5. The Scientific Council received and noted the documents entitled: "Report of the meeting of the 57th Session of the Governing Council" (document [SC/52/3](#)) and "Director's update from the 51st Session of the Scientific Council" (document [SC/52/4](#)), without additional comment.

Biennial Report of the Occupational Health and Safety Committee (OHSC), 2014–2015

6. The report was presented by the Chair of the Committee, Dr Florence Le Calvez-Kelm. The Scientific Council thanked Dr Le Calvez-Kelm and noted the report.

Production of Standard Reports

7. The Director outlined the recommendations from the Working Group, composed of members of the Scientific and Governing Councils, which reviewed and advised on the production of standard reports.

8. The Director welcomed the Scientific Council's endorsement of the proposals made by the Working Group, and the recommendation that these be approved by the Governing Council. The Director will follow the suggestion by the Scientific Council that information on scientific publications and other important reports be presented on IARC's website.

9. The Director is presenting the proposals on Standard Reports for consideration by the Governing Council at the current session (see document [GC/58/9](#)).

Director's response to the Reviews of the Sections of Infections (INF) and Mechanisms of Carcinogenesis (MCA), held in January 2015

10. The Scientific Council noted the responses given by the Director and the Group Heads of the two Sections, and the good progress made in addressing the points raised by the Review panels over the year since the reviews were conducted.

11. In relation to the INF Section the Scientific Council noted the efforts made by both Groups in establishing additional collaborations with local groups in France, which can support and provide access to key resources. Further progress has been made in discussing access of IARC scientists to animal models through collaboration with research groups in Lyon. Based on the Scientific Council comments, the Director had made additional investment to appoint a post-doctoral scientist working on mechanisms of carcinogenesis in the Infections and Cancer Biology Group (ICB).

12. For the Groups in MCA, the Scientific Council noted the opportunities to align experimental work with agents of priority for evaluation in the IARC Monographs. In response, there is joint planning between MCA and the IARC Monographs Section in the selection of agents being studied in the experimental models of both somatic mutations and epigenomic alterations. The Molecular Mechanisms and Biomarkers Group (MMB) reformulated the post-description of a vacant P2 scientist position to recruit expertise in mechanisms and hypothesis-driven research, as suggested by the Scientific Council.

13. The Scientific Council highlighted in particular the importance of ensuring adequate bioinformatics support for the Epigenetics Group (EGE) and MMB, but also more widely across the Agency. The Director explained to the Scientific Council the changes and investment that had already been made as a result of the growing demands in this area of the Agency's research, as well as the high degree of cooperation with experts in bioinformatics in Lyon. At the same time he acknowledged the need to continue to enhance bioinformatics resources both through investment within IARC and through external collaborations. This is an area undergoing in-depth planning over the coming year, including in consultation with Scientific Council members, and will be discussed with the Scientific Council at its 53rd session.

Discussion with the Director, the Director of Administration and Finance (DAF) and the Scientific Council

14. The Scientific Council requested during its previous session, the inclusion in the agenda of an opportunity to discuss with the Director and the Director of Administration and Finance generic issues relating to the running of the Agency.

15. The Director presented a broad overview of the main pillars he was working on to support the mission of the Agency and also the challenges in implementing IARC's strategic plan and fulfilling its potential. The Scientific Council highlighted both the need for additional funding and the obstacle the lack of resources presents to accomplishing the implementation of the IARC's strategy and programmes.

16. The Director recognizes the limited additional resources likely to come from Participating States through assessed contributions, or via competitive grant funding. Notwithstanding this recognition, dialogue with individual Participating States in relation to additional voluntary contributions merits exploration for specific project areas. In addition, a resource mobilization consultant has been hired to assist the Agency in identifying new potential donors/funders for its research portfolio.

Presentation of posters by IARC scientists

17. The presentations of posters by IARC scientists were given an earlier, more prominent position in this year's Scientific Council programme.

18. The feedback from the Scientific Council on this initiative was extremely positive, commenting on the quality of the work presented and on the great value for the Scientific Council members of the opportunity to interact directly with the enthusiastic and driven scientists in the Agency. The Scientific Council suggested that this opportunity be retained at future meetings.

19. The Director is considering how this particular element of the Scientific Council meeting could be expanded or enhanced as a part of its overall agenda in order to generate additional advice from Council members.

Presentation of cross-cutting themes and discussion

20. Three potential new multidisciplinary research topics involving several IARC Sections were presented, to seek advice from the Scientific Council on technical and scientific aspects, and on their appropriateness within the Agency's overall mission and strategy.

21. The Director was pleased with the comments and advice provided by the members of the Scientific Council to aid development and implementation of the areas discussed. Further consideration is being given as to how to maximize the value of these Scientific Council sessions in relation to advice and future research planning at IARC.

Purchase of scientific equipment – Medium-term support to the Biobank

22. The Scientific Council strongly recommended that the Governing Council approves the purchase of scientific equipment as proposed, emphasizing that it considered these purchases essential for the continuing operation of the Biobank, a resource of critical importance for the activities of the Agency.

23. The Scientific Council further noted that as this equipment is needed soon, and that it is not possible to wait until the move to the new building to make this basic investment in equipment.

24. The Director welcomed the endorsement by the Scientific Council and asks the Governing Council to consider this recommendation in document [GC/58/18A](#).

Scientific Peer-Review of the Section of Genetics (GEN)

25. The overall conclusions of the peer-review panel were extremely positive, rating GEN highly with regard both to the scientific quality and the fit with the Agency's mission and strategy. The Director thanked the peer-review panels and the Scientific Council for their constructive comments and recommendations.

26. Responses to the suggestions and comments coming from the peer-review, including the advice on the Biostatistics Group, will be addressed over the coming year and the Director will report back on these actions at the next sessions of the Scientific and Governing Councils.