

International Agency for Research on Cancer



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CONTINUITY AND TERM OF OFFICE OF SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL MEMBERS

Introduction

1. After the 46th Scientific Council in January 2010, the Outgoing Chair (Dr Harry Comber, Ireland) expressed some concern about the fact that the mandate of eight of the 21 members of the Scientific Council would come to an end in 2011, which may have consequences for continuity.
2. Newly-elected members first have to familiarize themselves with the activities of the Agency before being in a position to provide efficient and useful advice to the Secretariat. It was therefore suggested to consider providing for the possibility of some Scientific Council members having a shorter term of office than the four year term currently stated in the Statute. This would help avoid an excessively high turnover of members in any one year. An average of five members departing each year was suggested as desirable.

Current situation

3. In May 2008, Article VI ("Scientific Council") of the IARC Statute was amended¹ to reflect the fact that the membership was no longer "... of a maximum of 20 highly qualified scientists...". The duration of the term of office of members of the Scientific Council was left unchanged, i.e. "... a term of four years."

¹ 1. The Scientific Council shall be composed of highly qualified scientists, selected on the basis of their technical competence in cancer research and allied fields. Members of the Scientific Council are appointed as experts and not as representatives of Participating States.

2. Each Participating State may nominate up to two experts for membership in the Scientific Council and, if a Participating State makes such a nomination, the Governing Council shall appoint one of them.

3. In identifying experts to be considered for appointment to the Scientific Council, Participating States shall take into account advice to be provided by the Chairperson of the Scientific Council and Director of the Agency concerning the expertise required on the Scientific Council at the time of those appointments.

4. Members of the Scientific Council shall serve for a term of four years. Should a member not complete a term, a new appointment shall be made for the remainder of the term to which the member would have been entitled, in accordance with paragraph 5.

5. When a vacancy arises on the Scientific Council, the Participating State that nominated the departing member may nominate up to two experts to replace that member in accordance with paragraphs 2 and 3. Any member leaving the Scientific Council, other than a member appointed for a reduced term, may be reappointed only after at least one year has elapsed.

6. The Scientific Council shall be responsible for:

- (a) adopting its own rules of procedure;
- (b) the periodical evaluation of the activities of the Agency;
- (c) recommending programmes of permanent activities and preparing special projects for submission to the Governing Council;
- (d) the periodical evaluation of special projects sponsored by the Agency;
- (e) reporting to the Governing Council, for consideration at the time that body considers the programme and budget, upon the matters dealt with in sub-paragraphs (b), (c) and (d) above.

4. It is expected that there will be eight members of the Scientific Council leaving in 2011, five members in 2012, three members in 2013 and five members in 2014.

Proposal

5. Adjusting the number of Scientific Council members who depart each year would require a change in the IARC Statute, to be presented first to the Governing Council for its consideration and adoption and then also accepted by the World Health Assembly (WHA). However, since the WHA is held after the Governing Council, any amendment of the Statute would have no effect on the length of the term of office of the eight members of the Scientific Council who will be elected by the Governing Council in May 2011.

6. Altering the length of membership of some Scientific Council members would also require a consideration of related issues, including the method for deciding how many and which newly elected member(s) of the Scientific Council would have a term of office less than four years, and the duration of the term of office.

7. When looking at the longer term, it appears that the situation is a particular problem for year 2011, but not so critical the years after that. Losing eight or five members in 2011 and 2012 respectively, still leaves a majority (of 13 or 16) remaining members and would not seem therefore to be critical.

8. Ensuring the continuing quality and balance of skills on the Scientific Council should remain a top priority.

9. The above points were discussed in some detail during a teleconference with the Director and the Governing and Scientific Council Chairs and Vice-Chairs held in September 2010. As a consequence the Secretariat thought to suggest accepting the situation for 2011 and to seek the advice of the Scientific Council concerning a proposal to amend the Statute to allow for a more even turnover of Scientific Council members with less time pressure. No change is therefore proposed to the departure of eight members from the Scientific Council in 2011.

10. The Secretariat also sought the views of the WHO Legal Office (LEG). The view of LEG was that changing the Statute might not be justified given that the remaining number of members (minimum 13 of 21) remains relatively high and that the proposed amendment introduces an undesirable element of uncertainty into the election of Scientific Council members with variable terms of office.

11. The Scientific Council is thus invited to consider leaving the IARC Statute unchanged and accepting the current level of annual turnover of Scientific Council members, bearing in mind in addition that new States may join IARC and therefore the situation may evolve further in the coming years.