

DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 55th SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

1. The Scientific Council has the essential roles of advising the Director and the Governing Council on the Agency's scientific strategy and its implementation, and evaluating the scientific quality of the research carried out at IARC through the participation of its members in the Peer-Review Panels.
2. Dialogue with and between the two Councils is promoted through regular teleconferences between the Director and the Governing Council and Scientific Council Chairs and Vice-Chairs, and by the Chairs' attendance of the other Council's sessions.
3. The 55th Session of the IARC Scientific Council was held in Lyon from 30 January to 1 February 2019. It was attended by the Vice-Chairperson of the Governing Council, Dr Stephen Robbins. The following sections of this document present a summary of the actions taken in response to the discussions and recommendations made during the 55th Session of the Scientific Council that are not addressed elsewhere on the agenda of the current session of the Governing Council.

Presentation of the Director's Report

4. In accordance with Resolution [GC/58/R6](#)¹, the Director presented the major scientific highlights and highlighted the list of publications of Agency staff (available from <http://www.iarc.fr/en/research-groups/staffpublications.php>). Furthermore, the Director reported on the discussions of the 60th Session of the Governing Council and on updates from the 54th Session of the Scientific Council.
5. The Scientific Council stressed the importance of the Agency's work in cancer screening and encouraged IARC to ensure that coverage of screening programmes is optimal. The scientists of the Agency work closely with the countries concerned to roll out screening programmes that are tailored to the particular economic situation while being contingent on the national health system's capacity. IARC scientists will ensure that programme design will provide maximal benefit for the population in these countries.

¹ At its 58th Session, the Governing Council decided that an Interim Annual Report of the Agency's activities in odd-numbered years be replaced by an oral presentation by the Director of major scientific highlights and by the production of a list of publications of Agency staff.

6. The Scientific Council underlined the importance of the Agency's Education and Training Programme in building capacity in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The Agency will explore opportunities for resource mobilization and strategic partnerships to widen the scope of the education and training activities. The Agency is considering the development of more online material, which could enable the provision of training to a larger number of trainees at reduced costs.
7. The Director agreed to the proposal of the Scientific Council that IARC should engage in efforts to raise IARC's international profile with clinicians by attending major clinical and oncological conferences.
8. The Director expressed her commitment to enhancing communication and increasing the visibility of IARC more generally. This intention was strongly supported by the Scientific Council.
9. It was agreed that the Director would provide to the Scientific Council members a short presentation of IARC that could be used for raising awareness of the impact of the Agency.
10. The Director mentioned the Biennial Report of the IARC Ethics Committee (IEC) 2017–2018, referring to Dr Béatrice Fervers as the outgoing IEC Chairperson, and the Scientific Council noted with appreciation the report of the IEC (see Document [GC/61/9](#)), without additional comments.
11. The Director of Administration and Finance reported on the implementation of Data Protection and Data Security policies at IARC, in the context of the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into effect in May 2018. This important work was appreciated by the Scientific Council.

Presentation of the Director's main thoughts on scientific directions and opportunities at IARC

12. The Director laid out her scientific directions and opportunities for the Agency for the coming years within the broader context of global initiatives in collaboration with WHO and French partners, and the strong position of IARC within the larger noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) agenda.
13. Several potential areas of future growth were highlighted, while cautioning that the Agency was in a particularly critical budgetary situation after a decade of "no growth" policies. Any future developments would have to be assessed against the availability of internal or external resources.
14. The Scientific Council expressed its broad support for the strategy presented by the Director.

Director's response to the Reviews of the Sections of Early Detection and Prevention (EDP) and Nutrition and Metabolism (NME), held in January 2018

15. In line with the recommendations regarding the production of standard reports, the Director gave an oral presentation on the responses to the Peer-Reviews of EDP and NME.
16. Both Sections received very positive evaluations and constructive recommendations, which were studied in detail in the months after the review.
17. The delineation of the two Groups in EDP has been clarified and is based on approaches to studies. The suggested enlargement of activities into psychosocial, implementation research and

health economics was achieved through increased internal and external collaborations, and further efforts are under way to continue this development. Multicentre studies in the Section are open to all regions and have recently added new partners, with the aim of making them global initiatives. As suggested by the reviewers, the future work in cervical cancer control will consider combined delivery of vaccination and human papillomavirus (HPV)-based screening in LMICs.

18. The importance of NME taking a leadership role in directing the future of the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition (EPIC) study was highlighted by the Peer-Review Panel. In collaboration with the EPIC Steering Committee, the Section has put forward ideas to consolidate EPIC through data centralization and sample replenishment. New guidelines for EPIC sample access will be developed. The Section is expanding its coordination of international epidemiological studies and its support to LMICs through research and training activities.

Update on the "Nouveau Centre"

19. The current status and timeline of the "Nouveau Centre" was presented. The project is currently in its demolition/remediation phase, with a projected date for the physical move towards the end of 2021. There is currently a significant funding gap regarding the move and the full installation of facilities and equipment.

20. The Director noted the strong support of the Scientific Council for a renewed and focused resource mobilization strategy, and emphasized the key role that resource mobilization would play in her overall strategy. As one important element to strengthen this area, it was reported that a senior staff member would be recruited in the coming months.

Presentation of posters by IARC scientists

21. The presentations of posters were again a highly appreciated opportunity for in-depth scientific exchanges between Scientific Council members and IARC scientists.

22. As in previous years, specific members of the Scientific Council were assigned to report on posters in plenary, both to stimulate discussion of the work presented and to give visibility to it.

23. This setup has proven to be of mutual benefit and will be carried forward into the next Scientific Council sessions.

24. The Director noted with satisfaction that the projects presented elicited the unanimous assessment of high value and importance by the Scientific Council.

Request for support from the Governing Council Special Fund

25. The Scientific Council recommended that the Governing Council approve the purchase of two pieces of scientific equipment, to support DNA extraction for the IARC Biobank and the analysis of metabolomics data in the Biomarkers Group. The Scientific Council equally supported the request to provide funding to the HELPER study.

26. The Director welcomed the endorsement by the Scientific Council and asks the Governing Council to consider this recommendation in Document [GC/61/11](#).

Parallel sessions

27. Three potential areas of future growth were presented in parallel sessions: (i) WHO global initiatives on cervical cancer and childhood cancer: defining IARC's contribution, (ii) Outstanding challenges and opportunities for preventive interventions: the example of weight control and metabolic health, and (iii) Maximizing the impact of IARC: building on the Mutographs platform.

28. As in previous years, and in order to stimulate more in-depth discussion with the Scientific Council, the sessions were held in parallel in small groups, followed by a short plenary session where a summary of the most significant points was presented by the rapporteurs.

29. The Director appreciated the rich discussions in the parallel sessions and the good guidance received. The suggested ways forward on the three areas were noted and will be taken into account in shaping the future scientific strategy of the Agency.

Scientific Peer-Review of the Section of Evidence Synthesis and Classification (ESC)

30. The Director thanked the Peer-Review Panel and the Scientific Council for the excellent quality of their assessments and recommendations and noted with satisfaction the high rating received by the Section, reflecting the outstanding scientific quality of the past work and future plans, as well as the perfect fit with the Agency's mission and strategy.

31. Responses to the suggestions and comments from the Peer-Review Panel will be addressed over the coming year, and the Director will report back more fully on these actions at the next sessions of the Scientific Council and the Governing Council.

Discussion of the Evaluation Report on the implementation of the IARC Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2016–2020

32. The Director noted with appreciation the Scientific Council's conclusion that the mid-term evaluation of the MTS 2016–2020 showed the impressive global reach and high impact of IARC.

33. The Agency appreciated the suggestion to focus on the most informative indicators rather than aiming for large coverage in future evaluations, while maintaining a good balance of quantitative and qualitative indicators as in this evaluation. One area that deserves further reflection is how to highlight the very high return on investment, the potential number of lives saved by cancer prevention, and the work of the Agency.

34. The result of this evaluation can be considered as a baseline for measuring trends based on quantitative indicators in future evaluations.

Discussion on the procedure for the preparation of the IARC MTS 2021–2025, including an evaluation of IARC

35. Document [SC/55/7](#) was presented as a basis for further discussion and elaboration by the Scientific Council.

36. The Director values the Scientific Council's active involvement in the overall process. To enable the Scientific Council to have an opportunity to review the draft evaluation report before its

finalization and submission to the Governing Council at its 62nd Session in 2020, the Agency has submitted a revised timeline and procedure for the preparation of the MTS 2021–2025. The Governing Council is kindly asked to consider the relevant document (Document GC/61/8) in its current session.

37. For the composition of the ad hoc Advisory Group to carry out an evaluation, the Agency has included in its proposal a suggested composition to ensure adequate Scientific Council representation, equal representation between Scientific Council and Governing Council members, and sufficient expertise covering the breadth of areas of IARC research, while aiming to keep the group to a manageable size.

38. The Director appreciated the support of the Scientific Council on an extension of the current MTS (2016–2020) by five months to allow sufficient time for the preparation of the next MTS (2021–2025), which includes an additional evaluation requested by the Governing Council.

Proposed Programme and Budget 2020–2021

39. The Scientific Council supported the budget proposal as being necessary to sustain the high productivity and output of the Agency.

40. The Scientific Council further highlighted the core mandate of IARC in training scientists, especially from LMICs, and the need to re-establish the IARC Fellowships Programme, which was regrettably suspended in the current biennium due to the budget cuts.

41. The Director welcomed the Scientific Council's recommendations that the Governing Council adopt the Proposed Programme and Budget 2020–2021 as submitted by the Secretariat.