

*Monday 11 and Tuesday 12 May 2020*

*To be held by webconference (due to COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions)*

**ADVISORY GROUP REPORT ON THE EVALUATION OF IARC ACTIVITIES  
VIS-À-VIS ITS MANDATE,  
UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
IARC MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY (MTS) 2021–2025  
AND NOMINATION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL MEMBERS  
FOR THE JOINT MTS GC/SC WORKING GROUP**

**Report from the ad hoc Advisory Group on the evaluation of IARC activities**

1. In May 2018, the Governing Council requested that an evaluation of IARC activities be included into the preparation of the IARC Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) for 2021–2025 (see Resolution [GC/60/R11](#)).
2. In May 2019, the Governing Council established an ad hoc Advisory Group (see document [GC/61/8](#) and Resolution [GC/61/R7](#)) to conduct the above evaluation, to cover the following six areas:
  - (a) the alignment of IARC's activities with its mandate, as described in the Statute and the prioritization of different areas;
  - (b) the collaboration between IARC and other parts of WHO to ensure clear definition of roles and effective cooperation and coordination;
  - (c) the contribution of multi-disciplinary research to IARC's strategy, including the balance of laboratory equipment in-house and accessed through external collaboration;
  - (d) the role and infrastructure for the biobank in IARC's research strategy;
  - (e) mechanisms to ensure the financial sustainability of IARC's research including the laboratory research and biobank; and
  - (f) approaches to maximize the value and impact of IARC's work.
3. The Advisory Group assembled to undertake the evaluation of IARC activities vis-à-vis its mandate included two members of the Governing Council, two members of the Scientific Council, and five internationally recognized leaders in cancer prevention research.
4. The Advisory Group met several times and was supported in its work by the Evaluation Office of the World Health Organization (WHO). The evaluation included the review of key documents, as well as interviews and surveys conducted with Governing Council and Scientific Council members and IARC and WHO staff.
5. Following an extensive in-person discussion on 18 and 19 October 2019, the Advisory Group issued ten key recommendations, detailed in its Evaluation Report which will be available to Scientific and Governing Council members.

6. The Advisory Group conducted the evaluation in alignment with the Governing Council specifications and within the timeframe set by the Governing Council.

7. The Scientific Council reviewed the Evaluation Report, noted that the evaluation was very rigorous, appreciated the report, generally agreed with the recommendations and also suggested that recommendations #5 and #6<sup>1</sup> be expanded regarding the coverage of needs and options, and proposed specific rewording to be brought to the attention of the Governing Council:

- **Recommendation 5:** “As computational biology needs are an increasingly important component of laboratory capacity, IARC should regularly update the SC and the GC on capacity for computational biology in the future”.
- **Recommendation 6:** “Given its financial constraints, IARC should intensify its efforts to obtain additional laboratory, computational biology, and other disciplinary expertise through collaboration, Visiting Scientists, secondments from Participating States and other partners, as well as offer opportunities for training in computational biology to junior scientists in the field. The result of these efforts should be incorporated into the aforementioned for balancing its internal and external laboratory facilities or in a separate strategy to be implemented moving forward”.

8. The Secretariat is currently developing a detailed Action Plan in response to the Advisory Group’s recommendations and will align it with comments and feedback from SC(56) and GC(62). The Action Plan is foreseen to be shared with GC members in June 2020 for comments and endorsement.

### **Update on the development of the IARC Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2021–2025**

9. As per Document [GC/61/8](#), the Evaluation’s findings and recommendations have been considered in the preparation of the Agency’s MTS 2021–2025 which is underway.

10. Through Governing Council Resolution [GC/61/R7](#), and in addition the Evaluation, the Agency was requested to implement further activities in preparation of the development of its next Medium-Term Strategy 2021–2025.

11. A wide external consultation was conducted with IARC stakeholders, including cancer experts, professional groups, and societies, WHO staff and others. The consultation was implemented using different means, including face to face interviews, as well as online surveys.

12. The Secretariat conducted a broad internal consultation with IARC personnel through Agency-wide working groups and staff briefing sessions, as well as discussions among the Senior Leadership Team.

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<sup>1</sup> - Recommendation 5 from Evaluation Report reads: “As bioinformatics needs are an increasingly important component of laboratory capacity, IARC should regularly update the Scientific Council and Governing Council on the computational and data storage needs for bioinformatics into the future.”  
- Recommendation 6 from Evaluation Report reads: “Given its financial constraints, IARC should intensify its efforts to obtain additional laboratory, bioinformatics, and other disciplinary expertise through collaboration, Visiting Scientists, and secondments from Participating States and other partners. The result of these efforts should be incorporated into the aforementioned for balancing its internal and external laboratory facilities or in a separate strategy to be implemented moving forward.”

13. The outcome the internal and external consultations has been analysed and is available for consideration during the preparation of the Agency's MTS 2021–2025. A summary report on the consultation results will be shared with GC and SC in June 2020.

14. Taking into account the information and recommendations provided through the above-mentioned activities, and considering in particular the emphasis by the ad-hoc Advisory Group on the need for a stronger prioritization of IARC's activities, the Secretariat proposes that IARC's new MTS 2021–2025 reflects priorities that a) respond to IARC's comparative advantages, b) reflect its values and principles and c) address those areas in cancer prevention research and science that are expected to positively and notably affect people's health.

15. From the afore-mentioned consultations and discussions, several thematic areas have emerged in which IARC should significantly strengthen its engagement, resources and collaboration throughout 2021–2025 as a matter of priority. At the same time, and in addition, IARC will conduct activities of continued high relevance for cancer prevention and research at the global level. Further details are provided in document GC/62/20 "Proposed structure for presenting IARC's Programme and Budget".

16. The Director takes this opportunity to thank the IARC personnel engaged in the internal MTS consultations and Beatrix Lahoupe for their important preparatory work for IARC's next MTS.

### **Nomination of Governing Council members on the Working Group to oversee the MTS development**

17. The Joint GC/SC MTS Working Group should be composed of:

- Six GC members representing different geographical regions and drawing on Participating States who have joined the Agency at different periods of its history. At least one of the six members should also be members of the Advisory Group conducting the evaluation [Germany and Switzerland].
- Four SC members representing a range of different disciplines. At least one of the four members should be also members of the Advisory Group conducting the evaluation. These members will be selected in discussion with the SC Chair and Vice-Chair.
- One representative from WHO, to be nominated by the WHO Director-General.

18. It was agreed at SC/56 in February 2020 that the SC members for the MTS Working Group (WG) will be: Drs Christine Friedenreich (Canada), Ravi Mehrotra (India), Janne Mikael Pitkäniemi (Finland) and Maria Sibilia (Austria). In addition, the SC Chair will liaise with four SC subcommittees, created to provide advice on the MTS 2021–2025 plan.

19. The Governing Council is requested to discuss and agree on its six members for this Working Group.