

To: Members of the ISSC

February 15, 2016

Communiqué: Joint Working Group on future ISSC-ICSU relations

Dear Colleagues,

In view of opportunities in the changing global landscape of scientific cooperation, and the increasing demands for more effective interdisciplinary approaches to today's global challenges, the International Council for Science (ICSU) and International Social Science Council (ISSC) have established a joint Working Group (WG) to explore closer institutional alignment, and possible amalgamation, between the two councils. The WG met for the first time on January 28th and 29th 2016, in Paris.

This initiative followed an exchange of letters in 2015 between ISSC President Alberto Martinelli and ICSU President Gordon McBean. With the full support of the Executive bodies of both organizations, the WG was mandated to consider how ISSC and ICSU can build on the positive experiences of recent mutual endeavours, such as Future Earth, and respond to internal and external pressures, including in the organization and funding of research, that call for more meaningful collaboration between the natural and social sciences, and for a unified and strengthened voice of science at the global level.

The WG, which will advise the Executive bodies of ISSC and ICSU, is co-chaired by Khotso Mokhele, former ICSU Vice President for Scientific Planning and Review (nominated by ICSU) and Pierre Ritchie, (former Secretary General of the International Union of Psychological Science) (nominated by ISSC). The ISSC delegation comprises Alberto Martinelli (ISSC President), Saths Cooper (ISSC Vice-President Information and Communication Outreach), and Renée van Kessel (ISSC Executive Committee Member). The ICSU delegation comprises Gordon McBean (ICSU President), Jinghai Li (ICSU Vice-President for Scientific Planning and Review), and David Black (ICSU Secretary General). The process is supported by Heide Hackmann and Mathieu Denis, Executive Directors of ICSU and ISSC respectively. External advisors may be invited to contribute to the work of the WG as discussions progress.

During its first meeting, the WG agreed on the importance of a comprehensive and open dialogue and, particularly, on the need to explore a full range of possible scenarios, from maintaining the status quo to an effective merger of ICSU and ISSC. It was agreed that each scenario should be carefully examined in terms of its pros and cons for future strategic, governance (including membership) and organizational arrangements. The WG created several work streams and plans to meet again in mid-April to consider the outputs from these.

In addition to scenario development, the WG will also identify a critical roadmap of communication and consultation with the membership and staff of both ISSC and ICSU. Due consideration will be given to the opportunities created by currently scheduled governance and consultative meetings, including, for example, the ICSU Unions' meeting in April 2016, the ISSC General Assembly in October 2016, and the ICSU General Assembly in October 2017.

It is important to reiterate that the WG's conclusions and recommendations – on both substance and process – will be submitted to the ICSU Executive Board and the ISSC Executive Committee, and that decisions about how and when to take WG recommendations forward will be based on agreement between these two bodies. We expect to update you on this process soon after the WG's meeting in April 2016.

With best regards,

Handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Alberto McBean".Handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "CAM McBean".

Alberto Martinelli and Gordon McBean

On behalf of the ISSC Executive Committee and ICSU Executive Board