

The International Science Council (ISC)

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These are extracts from the ISC upcoming Annual Report for 2019, namely:

- Message from Heide and Daya (this is a good introduction to what happened in 2019)
- Brief update on Action Plan (just an introduction with links to more information)
- Ocean Decade
- Governance: New committees appointed

Message from CEO and President (taken from Annual Report 2019)

The International Science Council's first full year of operation has been a period of intense activity, with the aim of positioning the ISC as a distinctive and effective global voice for science. We put in place the Council's new governance system and launched our first three-year action plan, setting out an ambitious programme of priority projects. We took stock of progress to date, working to consolidate existing partnerships and scientific initiatives. And we extended our global reach, appointing the Council's first patrons and a Special Envoy for Science in Global Policy.

The Council has expanded its networks and spheres of influence throughout 2019, working to enhance the visibility and voice of international scientific research and scholarship on issues of major concern to science and society. We have acted to increase the integration of science and evidence-informed understanding in major international policy processes. In June 2019, the Council appointed its inaugural patrons: Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights, Chair of the Elders and leading defender of climate justice; and Ismail Serageldin, Emeritus Librarian of the Library of Alexandria in Egypt. These patrons are using their international standing and influence to assist the Council in advocating for the social, political, economic and cultural value of science to policy-makers and the public. In addition, the appointment of Flavia Schlegel as Special Envoy for Science in Global Policy has bolstered our presence in, and engagement with, the UN and other global policy fora.

In line with our statutes, we have appointed four advisory committees on the basis of nominations from our members: Science Planning; Freedom and Responsibility in Science; Outreach and Engagement; and Finance and Fundraising. Together, these committees bring together considerable scientific expertise and experience from differing sectors and settings, and will be crucial in taking forward our Action Plan 2019–2021 and shaping the next few years for the International Science Council.

Our regional offices in Africa; Asia and the Pacific; and Latin America and the Caribbean have built new partnerships, in particular through emerging 'open science platforms'. These platforms will convene different interests, ideas and institutions with the aim of mobilizing resources and building and strengthening the expertise required to advance data-intensive, solutions-oriented research in the Global South.

The Council's convening power was perhaps best demonstrated at the Global Forum of Funders hosted by the United States (US) National Academy of Sciences (NAS) in Washington, DC in early July 2019. This event brought together more than 80 science funders, including international development aid agencies, private foundations and national research councils. The Forum resulted

in a common call for a decade of global funding action to address the world's most pressing challenges, as captured in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This statement of shared purpose from research institutions and funders was noted in an article published in *Nature Sustainability* in September 2019 ([Messerli et al.](#)), which highlighted the ISC's unique ability to mobilize a diversity of expertise in the context of sustainability science. This exemplifies the kind of globally connected, scientifically impactful organization we want the Council to be.

The development and launch of our first action plan, *Advancing Science as a Global Public Good*, has been a major focus for activity in 2019. This Action Plan 2019–2021 sets out a portfolio of twelve projects, framed by four domains of critical importance for science and society: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the digital revolution, science in policy and public discourse, and the evolution of science and science systems. The Action Plan further incorporates activities that address the commitment of the ISC to uphold and advocate for freedom and responsibility in science. It also includes a vision for building the ISC's presence in different regions of the world, for amplifying the voice for science through outreach and engagement, and for strengthening our funding base.

The development of this strategic action plan has depended on the guidance, energy and commitment of our Governing Board, our members and partners, and staff at our headquarters and regional offices. We thank them sincerely for their collaboration and efficiency. Of course, as we implement the projects set out in our plan, and continue to deliver on existing activities, the goals we strive to achieve will require us to continue to scale up, to further consolidate our resources, to seek new partnerships, and to strengthen existing ones.

As we write this introduction to our Annual Report 2019, our world is [engulfed in a crisis](#) of almost unimaginable proportions, during which the ISC's power to convene expert minds in the traditional way has been stymied by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. This external threat has forced us to rethink and to find new, equally effective ways to convene our expert communities and deliver on our Action Plan 2019–2021. In this regard, some activities will be expanded and their schedules brought forward; new activities responding to the crisis, within the realms of our four domains of action, will be added; and some activities will have their timelines adjusted to reflect the new reality of our world.

In these times of great uncertainty, we can be certain about one thing: that science, and scientific thinking and values, must be central components of responses to global challenges. The International Science Council, with its vision of science as a global public good, stands ready to promote, support and enable the achievement of these goals.

Daya Reddy, President

Heide Hackmann, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

2019 in review: scientific initiatives

2019 was marked by the development and launch of the ISC's first action plan, *Advancing Science as a Global Public Good*, which sets out the Council's strategic priorities from 2019 to 2021.

The [Action Plan 2019–2021](#) was developed over the course of 2019, through consultations within the ISC membership and with the broader international science community, and many months of discussions within the ISC Governing Board. It contains an ambitious programme of much-needed initiatives that will position the ISC as an impactful global voice for science. This programme is

framed by four ‘domains of impact’ that reflect urgent priorities for science, in areas in which the ISC can provide leadership through its unique membership and convening power. The Action Plan also sets out a new regional strategy and fundraising plan for the Council, as well as a major project on scientific freedom and responsibility.

The Action Plan identifies twelve solutions-oriented initiatives to address major opportunities and challenges within the four domains. The projects and programmes presented are diverse in their nature, timescale and need for resources. Some are already in progress, building on previous work and existing partnerships, and some have been identified for further development beyond 2019. All work in synergy with the ISC’s portfolio of existing activities. The Action Plan is designed to be a living document, with project proposals that will be elaborated in consultation with members and partners, and flexibility to allow the Council to respond to major external developments, new opportunities and emerging issues.

See our website for more on the [Action Plan 2019–2021](#)

For more information see our 2019 Annual Report <https://council.science/annual-report-2019/>

The Ocean Decade

In 2017, the United Nations proclaimed that 2021 to 2030 would be the ‘UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development’, or the ‘Ocean Decade’ for short. The Ocean Decade is a major effort to boost ocean science, to share knowledge on the ocean, and to work together to meet Sustainable Development Goal 14 (healthy oceans) and the other SDGs with an ocean dimension.

The ISC supports the aims of the Ocean Decade, and in 2019 developed a memorandum of understanding with UNESCO’s Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC). This MoU sets out a framework of cooperation, include promoting the Ocean Decade among the scientific community, contributing to Ocean Decade preparations, accelerating scientific initiatives, and exploring opportunities for joint fundraising for scientific research. The [MoU was signed in early 2020](#).

One of the main aims of the Ocean Decade is to develop innovative ways to communicate ocean science, and to promote ocean literacy to a broad audience. Towards this aim, in 2019, the ISC and IOC launched a series of blogs. The blogs aim to feature new voices that we need to hear from – across human, natural, social and indigenous science and traditional knowledge – if the Ocean Decade is to be truly inclusive and multidisciplinary.

“Ocean data and information should be considered a ‘public good’ in the same way that weather observations are.”

Martin Visbeck, a member of the Ocean Decade’s Executive Planning Group

The MoU developed with UNESCO’s IOC is another chapter in a long collaboration between the two organizations. The ISC and IOC helped found, and remain at the helm of, two key international ocean science initiatives: [The Global Ocean Observing System](#), and the [Scientific Committee on Oceanic Research](#). The IOC–ISC partnership on the Ocean Decade illustrates the importance of collaboration between international scientific organizations, which together can mobilize key national, regional and global actors across the science–policy–society nexus to generate knowledge for the benefit of humankind.

Governance

The Governing Board appointed its advisory committees in 2019, on the basis of nominations from ISC members. Each of the committees is chaired and vice-chaired by Governing Board members and includes non-Governing Board members. The committees are:

[**The Committee for Science Planning**](#), which undertakes strategic scientific planning and reviews, addressing major thematic issues concerned with science for policy and policy for science.

[**The Committee for Freedom and Responsibility in Science**](#), which safeguards the principle of freedom and responsibility in science and deals with related issues at the global level.

[**The Committee for Outreach and Engagement**](#), which focuses on membership matters, outreach to external stakeholders, partnerships and strategic communications.

[**The Committee for Finance and Fundraising**](#), which addresses issues of finance, auditing, resource mobilization and risk management.