

Opening Remarks, Meeting of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Washington, DC, Oct. 25, 2011

Madam President, Distinguished Members of the Commission, Commission staff, and others participating in this hearing, my name is Mark Frankel and I am Director of the Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, commonly known by the acronym, AAAS. On behalf of my colleagues presenting this afternoon, I want to express our gratitude for the opportunity to appear before you to address the right “to enjoy the benefits of scientific and technological progress,” as articulated in Art. 14 of the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. In a moment, I will introduce my colleagues, who will address the issues directly.

But first, I wish to tell you a bit about the organization I represent--AAAS. We are the largest multi-disciplinary scientific society in the world, representing all areas of science and engineering. Although based in Washington, DC, we are international in scope; more than 17,000 (or 15%) of our members work outside the U.S., with nearly 1,000 of them based in Latin America. We publish one of the most respected scientific journals in the world, the journal *Science*. We also pursue several programmatic activities related to science education, the relationship between science and religion, science policy, and the work of the Program that I head, which focuses on the ethical, legal and human rights aspects of science and technology.

Of relevance to today’s hearing, on April 16, 2010, the Board of Directors of AAAS adopted a *Statement on the Human Right to the Benefits of Scientific Progress*, which was included among the materials we submitted in advance for the record, and mandated that the Association engage the broader international scientific community to identify the contributions it could make to that right. Today, you will hear about some of those activities, as a way to illustrate the important role that scientists can play in defining, interpreting, and implementing the right “to enjoy the benefits of scientific and technological progress.”

We will first hear from **Dr. Jorge Colón**. He is a native of Puerto Rico, where he graduated with a B.S. degree in Chemistry from the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus. In 1989, he earned a Ph.D. in Analytical Chemistry from Texas A&M University, and is now Professor in Inorganic and Bioinorganic Chemistry at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus.

I am proud to note that Dr. Colón has been a member of the AAAS since 1986, a member of the Board of Directors of the Caribbean Division of AAAS since 2006, and its current President since 2009. In 2010, he organized a Forum on Science and Human Rights at the Annual Conference of the AAAS-Caribbean Division, where my colleague Jessica Wyndham was the Invited Plenary Speaker.

After the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the AAAS-Caribbean Division began a project on science and science education capacity in Haiti. Dr. Colon is a co-author of the final report on that project, titled *Science for Haiti: A Report on Advancing Haitian Science and Science Education Capacity*, published by AAAS earlier this year. The report contains goals and recommendations that can serve as a "road map" for advancing science and science education capacity in Haiti.

Following **Professor Colón**, my colleague from AAAS, **Jessica Wyndham**, will speak. Jessica is Associate Program Director of the AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program where she directs the "Article 15" project, aimed at engaging the scientific community in articulating, promoting and assisting in the realization of the human right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress. Jessica manages the Program's "On-call" Scientists initiative that brings volunteer scientists and engineers together with human rights organizations in need of technical expertise. She is also Coordinator of the AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition. Jessica has worked extensively with national human rights institutions throughout Asia, the Pacific, Africa and the Americas. She has served as Legal Adviser for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Ecuador and is currently a consultant to the UN Independent Expert in the field of cultural rights. Jessica is also an Adjunct Professor at George Washington University where she teaches a graduate course on internal displacement. She is trained as a lawyer.