



AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition

Council Meeting Report

July 23, 2009

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Welcome, Introductions, and Meeting Objectives

Opening the first meeting of the AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition Council, **Mona Younis** (AAAS Science and Human Rights Program (SHRP)) acknowledged the serious commitment that Member Organizations had made in joining the Coalition. “You are here because your organizations recognize the vital role that science and scientists can play in the realization of human rights,” she said. Younis added that, “the number of scientific organizations that share this recognition is growing!” Ten associations attended the first planning meeting in June 2007, and today 26 organizations are full members, and another 15 are affiliated. She pointed out that these organizations represent the full spectrum of sciences -- behavioral, life, physical and social sciences -- as well as engineering, and they include both organizations with many years of experience with human rights and those that are new to this issue. Younis further noted the human rights community’s enthusiastic response to this initiative.

Younis introduced the Steering Committee, which is responsible for carrying out the decisions of the Council. “Their work and leadership over the course of the past year and a half has enabled us to get to this point,” she said. She added that their dedication was reaffirmed when they agreed to assume responsibility for the Coalition upon her departure from AAAS and until a new SHRP Director was appointed. They will be assisted by Jessica Wyndham, SHRP Project Director, who will serve as Acting Coordinator for the Coalition.

In describing the meeting objectives, Younis explained the Steering Committee’s recommendation that no changes be made to the Foundational Documents at the Council’s first meeting, given that Members had joined the Coalition on the basis of the policies and programs outlined in those documents, and, moreover, the importance for Members to become more knowledgeable about the Coalition, and ensure they are all “on the same page.” Younis added, however, that representatives are welcome to raise questions and concerns, and these will be addressed at the next Council meeting.

Council Members were also invited to suggest amendments and additions to the Council Document, which contains draft policies related to the role and responsibilities of the Coalition Council. Younis explained that the remainder of the meeting would be devoted to considering comments and suggestions raised at the Coalition launch; taking stock of the Coalition’s programmatic work, including the Joint Initiative; and assessing progress on the Plan of Action for the coming three years.

Review of the Foundational Documents

Paula Skedsvold (Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences) provided an overview of the Foundational Documents as a way of orienting the representatives to the key characteristics of the Coalition.

First, she noted that the Coalition is a network of scientific membership organizations aimed at engaging scientific associations and scientists in human rights. The Council discussed the

rationale for including human rights groups informally in the Coalition, but not as formal members. Skedsvold explained that the focus of the Coalition was to involve scientific associations in the human rights area. Mona Younis added that the prevailing view among human rights groups is that they have enough to do. She emphasized that we, as scientists, need to catch up. The work of the Coalition will necessarily involve reaching out to and working with the human rights community, and they have been involved substantively during sessions at both Coalition meetings. In addition, the Coalition is connecting to human rights groups through the Service to the Human Rights Community working group.

Skedsvold described the Coalition's organizational structure, and the roles of the various entities that constitute the Coalition. This includes the Coalition Council, which sets policy for the entire Coalition, considers new initiatives, and makes any changes to the Foundational Documents. The Steering Committee brings recommendations to the Council and, in turn, sees to it that the Council's decisions are implemented. Skedsvold noted that, according to the Foundational Documents, two representatives of the human rights community should be part of the Steering Committee. This has not occurred and the question was raised as to whether this requirement should be removed. This will be a topic for Council consideration at a later meeting. Skedsvold stated that the on-going work of the Coalition occurs at the level of the programs: the five working groups and the Joint Initiative. At present there are five working groups addressing distinct areas of activity, and all Coalition member representatives are required to participate in one of the working groups. The AAAS Science and Human Rights Program serves as the Coalition's secretariat.

Coalition Council: Operating Principles

Douglas Richardson (Association of American Geographers) explained that the Foundational Documents identify four principles that are to guide the Coalition in its work (page 5). According to these principles, the Coalition is:

- *Inclusive* of all interested scientific associations, societies, academies, and persons, in the United States and around the world, that recognize a role for science and scientists in the realization of human rights, or wish to learn more about this
- *Participatory* to a high degree, both by providing ample opportunities for members to contribute and become engaged and by relying on volunteer efforts to design and carry out its programs and initiatives
- *Decentralized* to encourage and support activities and new initiatives that advance collaboration between the science and human rights communities, as well as to be responsive to new needs, ideas, and opportunities
- *Transparent* by keeping all meetings open to both member associations and to affiliated associations and scientists (see Membership document) and keeping all materials publicly available and online.

As the Coalition's policy- and direction-setting body, Coalition members will expect the Council to demonstrate, through its policies and actions, its commitment to these principles. Richardson suggested that the Council and its members can do this by:

- *Promoting an atmosphere that is welcoming of all scientific membership organizations* that agree with the Coalition's Mission and Goals or are interested in learning about these goals. The Council will reach out to a variety of scientific membership organizations, both inside and outside the U.S., representing diverse scientific disciplines.
- *Welcoming associations at various stages of understanding of and commitment to human rights.* Facilitating the activities of a diverse set of members requires that the Coalition move gradually and thoughtfully to ensure that members move together as a group. Coalition members will learn and benefit from the experience of those associations with years of experience in human rights, but will also move in a way that includes associations with little or no prior work on human rights.
- *Respecting the autonomy of members* by refraining from making demands of member organizations, including AAAS, beyond what is required of each as a member of the Coalition. Coalition Council members can propose items for consideration by members, but each member organization will decide what it can and cannot do.
- *Contributing meaningfully to the Coalition through active participation* in at least one Coalition committee or working group, and regular attendance at and active participation in Coalition and Council meetings.
- *Raising awareness about science and human rights* within each membership organization, including in the ways outlined in the Foundational Documents (pages 2 and 3).
- *Contributing thoughtfully to deliberations regarding all aspects of the Coalition's work*, not just the area of activity to which they are most committed, and remaining open to new ideas from and opportunities for collaboration between the science and human rights communities.
- *Practicing transparency in decisions and actions.* Council meetings will be open to Coalition members, affiliated organizations and affiliated scientists. All Council-related documents will be posted on the Coalition website.

Coalition Council: Rules and Procedures
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Clinton Anderson (American Psychological Association) addressed the issue of rules and procedures for the Council. The following were agreed to:

Membership. All member organizations of the Coalition are represented in the Council by the member organizations' two designated representatives. Each member organization, however, has one vote in matters taken up by the Coalition Council, to ensure that each member organization speaks with one voice.

Meetings. The Coalition Council meets annually, for the initial three years (2009-2011), after which the Council may meet every other year or continue to meet every year, as agreed. Fifty percent of member organizations constitute a quorum. Attendance by teleconference or video conference also counts toward the quorum.

Coalition Council meetings are open to affiliated organizations and affiliated scientists, but only member organizations may participate in the formal deliberations of the Council.

Kichoon Yang (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics) raised the question of whether the Council should allow for a closed executive session. The Steering Committee will consider this question and make a recommendation to the Council.

Decisions. It was originally suggested that decision-making by the Coalition Council be governed by Robert's Rules of Order. **Arthur Kendall** (Capital Area Social Psychology Association) suggested, however, that Keesey's Rules be used instead given their relative simplicity. It was agreed that changes to the Coalition's Foundational Documents must be approved by a 2/3 vote of the Coalition Council. It was also agreed that between meetings, the Council may make decisions via e-mail if previous agreement is reached that the issue may be decided by e-mail vote.

Public Statements. While emphasizing the value of focusing on doing the work of the Coalition, rather than making statements, Council agreed that proposals for public statements may be considered by the Council. If they are approved, statements will be published in the name of the Coalition member organizations that endorse them, not the Coalition. Affiliated organizations and individual scientists will be given an opportunity to endorse such statements when appropriate to do so.

Publications. Distinguishing publications (e.g. reports, resources, toolkits) from public statements, Council considered the appropriate procedure for reviewing and approving such publications, including the possible need for a disclaimer. Council discussed creating a committee or subcommittee to consider these issues. It was also agreed that Council should encourage academic publications in the human rights area by individual participants in the Coalition, but that this was distinct from other publications, reports, or resource materials that may be prepared by the Coalition or its working groups.

A motion was put by **Doug Richardson** (Association of American Geographers) and seconded by **Rob Albro** (American Anthropological Association) that the Steering Committee establish a committee to examine the question of Coalition publications and the procedures that must be followed before publication. The motion was carried, and it was agreed that the Steering Committee would prepare draft guidance for circulation to the Council. Final approval and the responsibility for implementation would be delegated to the Steering Committee.

Coalition Steering Committee

The Coalition Steering Committee executes the decisions of the Coalition Council; sets the agenda for and conducts the Council meetings; organizes the Coalition's semi-annual

meetings; oversees Coalition working groups and committees; and serves as the liaison between AAAS, the Coalition, and the science and human rights communities.

Membership. As described in the Foundational Documents, the Coalition Steering Committee is comprised of the following:

- Program Director, AAAS Science and Human Rights Program (or her or his designee)
- One co-chair of each working group (five)
- Chairs of the following committees:
 - Membership;
 - Outreach and Communication; and
 - Special Events (three)
- Human rights community representatives (two, rotating biannually)

While the human rights community has welcomed the creation of the Coalition as overdue and much needed, they are not currently directly involved on the Steering Committee. There was broad consensus that the human rights community's involvement in the work of the Coalition was important, but that interaction and communication could be achieved in a variety of ways and that flexibility was valuable. For example, **Felice Levine** (American Educational Research Association) suggested establishing a dialogue with human rights organizations that do work relating to research and development: to learn their perspectives on the state of the art; understand their limits; and identify where new approaches could assist their work.

Meetings. The Steering Committee meets every two months (or as needed via conference calls).

Comments and Suggestions from the Coalition Launch

Susan Hinkins (American Statistical Association) summarized the comments and suggestions that had been contributed by participants during the Launch of the Coalition on January 14-16, 2009, along with current relevant Coalition policies, and Steering Committee recommendations. The Steering Committee recommendations were unopposed by Council. The suggestions from the launch and the Steering Committee recommendations were:

1. *International Membership*

Comment/Suggestion: A request was made to include language that is more likely to attract the participation of scientific associations outside the U.S., by stating that the Coalition “wishes to develop partnerships.”

Currently: As stated in the Foundational Documents, the Coalition currently “welcomes” the participation of organizations outside the U.S. (p. 2) and states that it is “open to international scientific networks and organizations, including both those based within and outside the United States” (p. 13). The Coalition is also committed to being “*inclusive* of all interested

scientific associations, societies, academies, and persons, in the United States and around the world, that recognize a role for science and scientists in the realization of human rights, or wish to learn more about this” (p. 5).

Recommendation: While reaffirming that scientific associations from outside the U.S. are welcome to join the Coalition and in view of the references to this effect within the Foundational Documents, no change is recommended to the current language in the Foundational Documents.

2. Membership of Human Rights Centers

Comment/Suggestion: Include human rights centers and human rights practitioners in the Coalition. Human rights centers have a role to play, therefore, the Coalition might consider an affiliated status for human rights centers.

Currently: The Coalition is a network of scientific membership organizations. The exception to this is the affiliated scientist category, which was introduced largely for individual scientists who seek assistance in introducing human rights to their associations. We have received requests for membership from university-based human rights programs and centers.

Recommendation: The Coalition is unique in its focus on the engagement of scientific membership organizations. Broadening membership to other types of institutions would substantially change the focus and operations of the Coalition. Individual scientists affiliated with human rights centers are instead encouraged to participate in the Coalition through their scientific associations or as affiliated scientists.

Many meeting participants urged greater interaction with human rights organizations, but the consensus was not to include human rights organizations as Coalition members *at this time* (See “Review of Foundational Documents” for a more detailed discussion of this issue. The Steering Committee recommendation is consistent.)

3. Building support infrastructure

Comment/Suggestion: Due to the long term nature of this work, an underlying theme of all the working groups should be building better infrastructure to enable future generations to carry it forward. A starting point is building databases of knowledge, experts, studies, and tools on a range of science and human rights issues and concerns.

Currently: The five areas of activity working groups plan to develop specialized databases.

Recommendation: Each area of activity working group should consider the support infrastructure necessary for their area and, taking into account available resources, they should include in their plans the development of such infrastructure as appropriate.

4. Students

Comment/Suggestion: The Coalition should keep in mind high school students and identify ways to keep these youngest scientists involved in human rights issues. This is a group that is science-interested and science-intense, and human rights issues have not been brought to their attention.

Currently: Thus far the Coalition has considered the engagement of university students, not high school students. Several working groups are committed to reaching university students via compilation of science and human rights curricula. The Plan of Action (2009-2011) includes a proposal for each working group to begin planning in 2010 an activity for university science students on campuses to be implemented in 2011. In parallel, over 2009-2011, the Outreach and Communication Committee will work with the Membership committee to develop a plan for a presence on university campuses and the engagement of science students.

Recommendation: To the extent that scientific membership organizations have the capacity to engage in outreach to high school students, the Coalition should encourage and facilitate the work of its members in these activities, and the Coalition should welcome greater participation in the Coalition of scientific associations engaged in such activities.

5. Science funding

Comment/Suggestion: An excellent service to the scientific community, and one with possible larger implications, is to advocate for the National Science Foundation (US), the National Institutes of Health (US), and other important funders of scientific research to include human rights in what they are soliciting from the researchers they fund. This will help motivate scientists to take up human rights related work.

Currently: The Coalition currently has no mention of working with funders.

Recommendation: In view of its importance to enabling more scientists to work at the intersection of science and human rights, the working group on Service to the Scientific Community is encouraged to explore and develop possible work in this area, in close collaboration with the working group on Science Ethics and Human Rights.

Programs: Progress Report on Areas of Activity and Joint Initiative

Jessica Wyndham (AAAS Science and Human Rights Program) provided a progress report on the programs of the Coalition, which consist of the Article 15 Joint Initiative and the five areas of activity working groups: Welfare of Scientists, Science Ethics and Human Rights, Service to the Scientific Community, Service to the Human Rights Community, and Education and Information Resources.

Areas of Activity

Potential areas of activity for the Coalition were identified by the Coalition planning group, starting in September 2007, based on interests of associations, areas in need of further elucidation, and areas to which this Coalition was uniquely placed to contribute. Information about the Areas of Activity Working Groups is posted online on the [Coalition website](#). The area of activity working groups met for the first time at the launch of the Coalition in January 2009. At this initial meeting, the groups identified priorities and recruited new members. Since January 2009, progress among the five groups has been uneven, with only some making substantial progress in addressing their priority areas. In addition, the AAAS Science and Human Rights Program has been able to provide less staff support for the Coalition than they had planned.

A brief overview of the progress made by each working group and by the Joint Initiative was provided:

Welfare of Scientists. This is the smallest group with 12 members. The priority identified in January was to compile a resource guide for establishing and maintaining a scientific freedom and human rights project or program in scientific membership organizations. Activities so far include: (1) arranging a training session to prepare scientific associations to better respond to violations of the human rights of scientists that will take place at the January 2010 Coalition meeting; (2) compiling statements from key advocates in this area about the importance and value of scientific associations' role in responding to violations of human rights; and (3) developing a website to highlight current human rights cases of scientists.

Science Ethics and Human Rights. This is a large group with 22 members to date. The priority identified in January was to develop a human rights framework for science ethics which draws upon human rights instruments, as well as other relevant international or national standards. This is a complex area and the group will use the July meeting to work further on the priority.

Service to the Scientific Community. The priority identified in January was to develop a "Starter Packet" which will support associations in initiating human rights activities within their associations. A draft was developed that provides a Human Rights 101, information about why scientists have taken up human rights work, types of work currently undertaken by scientific organizations in human rights, an explanation of how to get started, information regarding the Coalition, and a list of resources. The draft is being reviewed and will be finalized when the group meets on September 30.

Service to the Human Rights Community. This is the largest group with 26 members, but currently, it needs a co-chair. The priority identified in January was to focus on "communication," specifically reaching out to the human rights community about the value of bringing science to human rights work. The group is currently discussing how to communicate the existence and purpose of the Coalition to the human rights community.

Education and Information Resources. The priority identified in January was to create a database that connects bibliographic information, contact information for experts, and case studies through a well-structured search mechanism of topics and geographic regions. The group is currently developing a series of case studies that describe ongoing partnerships between scientists and human rights practitioners, and compiling a bibliography on science and human rights, including literature, codes of ethics, syllabi and other resources.

Joint Initiative

In addition to the five areas of activity, the planning group also decided to adopt a Joint Initiative to bring the entire Coalition membership together. Article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which describes the right to “enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications,” was chosen as the focus of the Joint Initiative because it met three criteria: (1) it lies at the nexus of science and human rights; (2) it cannot be accomplished without the scientific community; and (3) it has direct relevance for each of the areas of activity to which the Coalition is already committed. Each working group will contribute to the Joint Initiative, leading in 2011 to a presentation on Article 15 to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

During the second half of 2009, each working group will identify the specific projects they will pursue as part of the Joint Initiative. To assist the groups in this process, all members will be trained in the meaning of Article 15, and each group will hold meetings or discussions to identify the links between Article 15 and their specific area of activity.

Plan of Action (2009-2011)

Mona Younis explained that the Plan of Action had been drafted as part of the work that began in June 2007 and was completed in December 2008 to lay the foundation for the Coalition. The plan was intended to serve multiple purposes, including planning, outreach, and fundraising. Describing its content, Younis said it was designed to be “specific enough” to provide guidance and to permit assessment of progress, yet “broad enough” to be flexible and encouraging of new and additional initiatives and ideas. Drafting the Plan of Action was also helpful in revealing the need for a joint initiative that “pulls the entire membership together.”

In reviewing the document, Younis focused on three items. First, she noted that according to the Plan of Action, the Coalition was off schedule. Throughout the document, there is mention of completing tasks, such as detailed plans of action for each area of activity working group, that have not been accomplished on schedule. Further, progress has been made on only three of the items to be accomplished in 2009 (p. 2): identify initial set of target associations and invite them to join the working group; identify possible partners with specialized expertise in the relevant area of activity; and develop a web presence for each working group on the AAAS website. Younis explained that the loss of a staff person in January reduced the capacity of Science and Human Rights Program to provide the guidance and support to the working groups that were needed. She added that this problem should be

redressed with the anticipated positive response to a funding proposal, which will enable the Program to hire a staff person to assist (70% time) with the Coalition.

Younis then noted that the Plan includes activities of the Membership and Outreach and Communication committees. She said the Steering Committee had approved a delay in the formation of these committees until the new Program Director and Coalition Coordinator is hired.

Finally, Younis turned the Council's attention to the appendix which contains baseline data and benchmarks to be used in tracking the Coalition's progress and success. She explained that the appendix has been revised and updated. Council members received three documents: (1) the Plan of Action (2009-2011): Revised Appendix; (2) a list of Member and Affiliated Organizations' current human rights activities; and (3) a chart of four Member Organizations' full scope of human rights activities. She explained that the Program's intern, Jason Gordon, who prepared the charts would be continuing the research to complete the gathering of baseline data. Younis added that the areas of activity working groups have been encouraged to identity their own baseline data and benchmarks that are appropriate to their areas of activity, and against which they would like their progress to be measured. The current list does, however, include at least one item that is appropriate for each of the five working groups.

Council Suggestions and Decisions:

- Disseminate a web-based questionnaire to collect baseline data that accurately captures what we want to measure over time;
- Develop more nuanced measures to capture an "engagement ratio" (e.g., a small organization initiating a human rights activity is different to a large organization with a pre-existing human rights committee engaging in human rights work);
- Provide greater detail on the chart of examples of four organizations; and
- When identifying member/affiliated organizations by field, collapse "behavioral" and "social" science categories.

In conclusion, Younis thanked all representatives of member organizations for attending the first meeting of the Council and reminded them that the next meeting of the Council will take place in July 2010, the final date of which will be announced in the coming months.

Appendix 1: Meeting Attendees

Organization	Representative(s)
1. American Anthropological Association	Rob Albro Brian Estes
2. American Educational Research Association	Felice Levine
3. American Historical Association	Arnita Jones
4. American Orthopsychiatric Association	Jill McLeigh
5. American Psychological Association	Clinton Anderson Sangeeta Panicker
6. American Public Health Association	Morgan Taylor
7. American Society of Civil Engineers	Lisa Jennings Michael Sanio
8. American Sociological Association	Brian Gran Lee Herring
9. American Statistical Association	Susan Hinkins
10. Association of American Geographers	Doug Richardson
11. Capital Area Social Psychological Association	Kathleen Ashenfelter Art Kendall
12. Consortium of Social Science Associations	Howard J. Silver
13. Council on Undergraduate Research	Nancy Hensel
14. Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences	Paula Skedsvold Paul Slovic
15. Linguistic Society of America	Alyson Reed
16. National Council of Teachers of Mathematics	Kichoon Yang
17. Psychologists for Social Responsibility	Luisa Saffiotti
18. Sigma Xi	Jeffrey Toney
19. Society for Research in Child Development	Lonnie Sherrod
20. Sociologists without Borders	Judith Blau

Secretariat (AAAS Science and Human Rights Program):

Ellen Dupont, Intern

Jason Gordon, Intern

Jessica Wyndham, Project Director

Mona Younis, Program Director and Coordinator, AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition

Appendix 2: Plan of Action (2009-2011): Revised Appendix

	June 2008	July 2009	Dec 2009	Dec 2010	Dec 2011
AAAS affiliated associations = 262					
Coalition Membership					
Member Organizations	18	26			
Life sciences	(1)	(2)			
Physical sciences	(2)	(2)			
Social/ Behavioral sciences	(12)	(18)			
Engineering	(0)	(1)			
General scientific or networks	(3)	(3)			
Affiliated Organizations	-	15			
Life sciences	-	(2)			
Physical sciences	-	(7)			
Social/ Behavioral sciences	-	(3)			
Engineering	-	(1)			
General scientific or networks	-	(2)			
Affiliated Scientists	-	36			
Member/Affiliated Organizations active in working groups	-	24			
Organizations* that:					
▪ Have human rights committees, sections, or working groups	14				
▪ Issue statements or resolutions on human rights	11				
▪ Conduct research on human rights issues	?				
▪ Work on protection of scientists	14				
▪ Hold education programs on human rights for their members	?				
▪ Hold public education programs on human rights and their discipline	?				
▪ Award prizes for upholding human rights	?				
▪ Apply discipline-specific knowledge and skills to human rights	?				
▪ Have a <i>pro bono</i> program for human rights groups	?				
▪ Include “human rights” in their codes of ethics	8				

* All scientific membership organizations, whether or not they are affiliated with AAAS or the Coalition

Appendix 3: Baseline and Benchmarks for Member and Affiliated Organizations

Member Organizations: 26

Affiliated Organizations: 15

Members / Affiliated Organizations that:

July 2009

- | | |
|---|----|
| ▪ Have human rights committees, sections, or working groups | 10 |
| ▪ Issue statements or resolutions on human rights | 6 |
| ▪ Conduct research on human rights issues | 2 |
| ▪ Work on protection of scientists | 8 |
| ▪ Hold education programs on human rights for their members | 6 |
| ▪ Hold public education programs on human rights and their discipline | 0 |
| ▪ Award prizes for upholding human rights | 4 |
| ▪ Apply discipline-specific knowledge and skills to human rights | 2 |
| ▪ Have a <i>pro bono</i> program for human rights groups | 1 |
| ▪ Include “human rights” in their codes of ethics | 6 |

Appendix 4: Member Organizations' human rights activities (sample)

	American Psychological Association	American Public Health Association	American Physical Society	American Statistical Association
Have human rights committees, sections, or working groups		International Human Rights Committee	Committee on International Freedom of Scientists	Committee on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights
Issue statements or resolutions on human rights	√		√	
Conduct research on human rights issues				
Work on protection of scientists			√	
Hold education programs on human rights for their members		Annual Meeting Theme: Public Health and Human Rights (2006)		Annual Meeting: Using Our Discipline to Enhance Human Welfare (2005)
Hold public education programs on human rights and their discipline				
Award prizes for upholding human rights			Andrei Sakharov Prize	
Apply discipline-specific knowledge and skills to human rights				√
Have a pro bono program for human rights groups				Statisticians Without Borders
Include "human rights" in their codes of ethics	√	√		