

Responsibilities of scientists underlined by scientific community

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The General Assembly of the International Council for Science (ICSU) today reaffirmed the universal values that should guide the conduct of science. It explicitly recognized the key social responsibilities of the scientific community that need to accompany the free practice of science. While the focus of the Principle of Universality of Science – which is central to ICSU's statutes and a basic condition of worldwide membership of the ICSU family – has been on the preservation of scientific freedoms, ICSU is mindful of the need for scientists to pay equal attention to their responsibilities.

"The balance between scientific freedom and responsibility is not always easy to get right, but awareness of its significance and of the value of ongoing dialogue must be maintained within the scientific community." says Bengt Gustafsson, Chair of ICSU's Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in the conduct of [Science](#) (CFRS). "By extending its consideration of the long-established Principle of the Universality to explicitly include responsibilities as well as freedoms, ICSU has emphasized that this balance is critical both for science and society."

The new wording of the Principle was approved today by the membership of ICSU at its General Assembly in Rome. It reads as follows:

The Principle of Universality (freedom and responsibility) of Science

The free and responsible practice of science is fundamental to scientific advancement and human and environmental well-being. Such practice, in all its aspects, requires freedom of movement, association, expression and communication for scientists, as well as equitable access to data, information, and other resources for research. It requires responsibility at all levels to carry out and communicate scientific work with integrity, respect, fairness, trustworthiness, and transparency, recognising its benefits and possible harms.

In advocating the free and responsible practice of science, ICSU promotes equitable opportunities for access to science and its benefits, and opposes discrimination based on such factors as ethnic origin, religion, citizenship, language, political or other opinion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or age.

Promoting good scientific conduct and preventing misconduct is critical for science as a whole, and for this reason ICSU's CFRS was also heavily engaged in the organization of the second World Conference on Research Integrity in Singapore in July 2010. The Singapore Statement on Research Integrity, which stemmed from the event, was presented to the Assembly in Rome. The statement emphasizes the need for honesty in all aspects of research, accountability in the conduct of scientific research, professional courtesy and fairness in working with others, and good stewardship of research on behalf of others.

Gustafsson adds: "As our world evolves, there are continually changing challenges to the freedoms of scientists, and an increased onus on the scientific community to articulate and embrace its responsibilities. Whilst there can be national, and even disciplinary, differences in the way research is actually carried out, there are certain principles and responsibilities that are fundamental to 'good science'. Given the unique position of scientists as the gate-keepers of new knowledge in today's knowledge societies, respect for these values is critically important if

confidence in science is to be maintained."

Provided by International Council for Science

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