



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

## STATUTES OF THE INTERNATIONAL BIOETHICS COMMITTEE OF UNESCO (IBC) \*

### Article 1

A permanent Committee, named the International Bioethics Committee of UNESCO (IBC), hereafter referred to as 'the IBC', is hereby established within the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

### Article 2 - Functions

1. The Committee shall have the following functions:
  - (a) it shall promote reflection on the ethical and legal issues raised by research in the life sciences and their applications, as well as encourage the exchange of ideas and information, particularly through education;
  - (b) it shall encourage action to heighten awareness among the general public, specialized groups and public and private decision-makers involved in bioethics;
  - (c) it shall co-operate with the international governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned by the issues raised in the field of bioethics as well as with the national and regional bioethics committees and similar bodies;
  - (d) in accordance with Article 24 of the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights, hereafter referred to as 'the Declaration':
    - (i) it shall contribute to the dissemination of the principles set out in the Declaration and to the further examination of issues raised by their applications and by the evolution of the technologies in question;
    - (ii) it shall organize appropriate consultations with parties concerned, such as vulnerable groups;
    - (iii) it shall make recommendations, in accordance with UNESCO's statutory procedures, addressed to the General Conference and give advice concerning the follow-up of the Declaration, and it shall identify practices that could be contrary to human dignity.
2. The IBC shall determine its programme of work which shall be made public. The IBC shall include in that programme any item so requested by the Director-General or the Executive Board. It shall take into account the views of the Intergovernmental Committee, hereafter provided under Article 11, concerning its programme.

---

\* Adopted by the Executive Board at its 154th Session, on 7 May 1998 (154 EX/Dec. 8.4).

### **Article 3 - Membership**

1. The IBC shall be composed of 36 members appointed by the Director-General. The members shall be independent and shall act in their personal capacity. When making his choice, the Director-General shall take into account cultural diversity, balanced geographical representation and the need to ensure appropriate rotation. He shall also take into account the nominations for membership of the IBC received from the Member States of UNESCO, Associate Members and non-Member States which have set up a permanent observer mission to UNESCO.
2. When proposing their candidates for the IBC, states shall endeavour to include eminent persons who are specialists in the life sciences and in the social and human sciences, including law, human rights, philosophy, education and communication, with the necessary competence and authority to perform the IBC's duties.
3. The Director-General shall not appoint simultaneously more than one national of the same state.

### **Article 4 - Observers**

1. Member States and Associate Members of UNESCO may take part as observers in the meetings of the IBC.
2. Non-Member States which have set up a permanent observer mission to UNESCO may take part as observers in the meetings of the IBC on the invitation of the Director-General.
3. The United Nations and the other organizations of the United Nations system with which UNESCO has concluded an agreement providing for reciprocal representation may take part as observers in the meetings of the IBC.
4. International governmental or non-governmental organizations with similar objectives to those of the IBC may be invited to take part as observers in the meetings of the IBC.
5. Specialists or other relevant persons or groups may be consulted on matters within the competence of the IBC.

### **Article 5 - Sessions**

The Director-General shall convene the IBC at least once a year.

### **Article 6 - Terms of office**

1. The term of office for members of the IBC shall be four years.
2. Half the IBC's members shall be replaced every two years.
3. The Director-General shall not appoint the same person for more than two consecutive terms of office.

### **Article 7 - Advice and recommendations**

The advice and recommendations of the IBC shall be taken by consensus, promptly made public and widely disseminated. Any member of the IBC shall have the right to record a dissenting opinion.

### **Article 8 - Rules of Procedure**

The IBC shall adopt its Rules of Procedure.

### **Article 9 - Secretariat**

1. The Director-General of UNESCO shall provide the staff and other means required for the operation of the secretariat of the IBC.
2. The Director-General shall appoint a member of the Secretariat of UNESCO as Secretary-General of the IBC.

### **Article 10 - Expenses**

1. The servicing expenses of the sessions of the IBC shall be financed by the appropriations allocated for this purpose by the General Conference.
2. Member States of UNESCO, Associate Members and non-Member States which have set up a permanent observer mission to UNESCO shall bear the expenses of the participation of their observers at the sessions of the IBC and of their participation in the Intergovernmental Committee.
3. UNESCO shall bear the expenses of the participation of specialists in connection with hearings requested by the IBC.

### **Article 11 - Intergovernmental Committee**

1. An Intergovernmental Committee, hereafter referred to as 'the Intergovernmental Committee', is hereby established within the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
2. The Intergovernmental Committee shall examine the advice and recommendations of the IBC, including those concerned with the follow-up of the Universal Declaration. The Intergovernmental Committee shall inform the IBC of its opinions. It shall submit its opinions to the Director-General for transmission, together with the advice and recommendations of the IBC, to the Member States, the Executive Board and the General Conference. It may transmit any proposals for the follow-up of the advice and recommendations of the IBC.
3. The Intergovernmental Committee shall be composed of 36 representatives of the Member States elected by the General Conference. Associate Members of UNESCO shall be invited to participate. When electing the members of the Intergovernmental Committee, the General Conference shall take into account cultural diversity, balanced geographical representation and the need to ensure appropriate rotation.
4. The term of office of members of the Intergovernmental Committee shall extend from the end of the ordinary session of the General Conference during which they are elected until the end of its second subsequent ordinary session.
5. Member States of UNESCO, Associate Members and non-Member States which have set up a permanent observer mission to UNESCO may take part in the meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee. The provisions of Article 4 relating to the IBC shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the Intergovernmental Committee.
6. The sessions of the Intergovernmental Committee shall be convened by the Director-General at least once every two years.
7. Where the Intergovernmental Committee or the Director-General so decides, a Joint Session of the IBC and the Intergovernmental Committee, hereafter referred to as 'the Joint Session', shall be convened. The Joint Session shall foster dialogue between the IBC and the Intergovernmental Committee on matters of mutual concern. Without limiting the generality of such matters, they may include consideration of any proposals to:

- (a) amend the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights; or
- (b) adopt any further declaration or any other international instrument within the field of competence of the IBC.

The Joint Session shall:

- (a) be chaired by the chairpersons of the IBC and of the Intergovernmental Committee as joint presiding officers;
- (b) be open to observers *mutatis mutandis* in accordance with Article 4; and
- (c) present a report on the meeting to the Director-General, who shall provide it to the Member States for such action as they may decide before it is presented to the General Conference.

#### **Article 12 - Revision**

These Statutes may be revised by the UNESCO Executive Board.