

Terms of Reference

I. Background

1. The creation of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) derives from the report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability, *Resilient People, Resilient Planet: A future worth choosing* of 30 January 2012 (hereafter referred to as "the GSP Report"), and specifically from Recommendation 51 thereof which states:

Governments and the scientific community should take practical steps, including through the launching of a major global scientific initiative, to strengthen the interface between policy and science. This should include the preparation of regular assessments and digests of the science around such concepts as "planetary boundaries", "tipping points" and "environmental thresholds" in the context of sustainable development. This would complement other scientific work on the sustainable development agenda, including its economic and social aspects, to improve data and knowledge concerning socio-economic factors such as inequality. In addition, the Secretary-General should consider naming a chief scientific adviser or establishing a scientific advisory board with diverse knowledge and experience to advise him or her and other organs of the United Nations.

2. So as to inform his response to Recommendation 51, the Secretary-General of the United Nations requested the Director-General of UNESCO to convene a small, ad hoc group of executive heads of UN organizations with a science-related mandate and of representatives of major scientific bodies to consider the Recommendation and provide advice to him on options for meeting the scientific advisory needs of the Secretary-General and the UN system as a whole, as well as on options for practical steps to strengthen the interface between policy and science, including the launching of a major global scientific initiative.
3. The Director-General of UNESCO assembled the requested Ad Hoc Group, with broad representation from UN agencies and the international scientific community. The Group met twice and benefitted from multiple consultations with additional agencies and organizations. The Ad Hoc Group recognized that full implementation of Recommendation 51 of the GSP Report would provide a strategic opportunity to realize a sustainable world where decision-making is informed by the best available knowledge co-designed, co-produced and co-delivered by the relevant stakeholders. The ultimate objective, according to the Group, should be to develop pathways to solutions for current and future global sustainability challenges through an effective science-policy interface. Implementation of Recommendation 51 should also aim at integrating the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development at the science-policy interface.
4. The Ad Hoc Group submitted its report to the UN Secretary-General on 24 May 2012. In response to the report of the Ad Hoc Group, the UN Secretary-General requested the Director-General of UNESCO to establish and chair a Scientific Advisory Board to advise him and other organs of the United Nations.

5. As a follow up to the Secretary-General's request, the Director-General of UNESCO elaborated a comprehensive Memorandum including terms of reference of the Board and a list of outstanding personalities with globally recognized scientific expertise and experience in the various fields of sciences for sustainability as well as on science-policy interface issues, to serve as potential members of the Board. In a spirit of transparency and collegiality, the Memorandum was addressed to the members of the Ad Hoc Group for their advice and consensus with regard to both the Terms of Reference and the membership of the Board. The results of this consultation process are reflected below.

II. Functions of the Scientific Advisory Board

6. The central function of the Board will be to provide advice on science, technology and innovation (STI) for sustainable development to the UN Secretary-General and to executive heads of UN organizations. The Board will bring together in a coherent manner the collective capacity of all relevant scientific fields, with due regard to social and ethical dimensions of sustainable development. The fields will span a broad spectrum, from the basic sciences, through engineering and technology, social sciences and humanities, ethics, health, economic, behavioral, and agricultural sciences, in addition to the environmental sciences, which are more commonly associated with sustainability.
7. In general terms, the Scientific Advisory Board will be entrusted with the following functions:
 - a) strengthening the linkage between science and policy;
 - b) ensuring that up-to-date and rigorous science is appropriately reflected in high-level policy discussions within the UN system;
 - c) offering advice, in cooperation and consultation with the UN agencies concerned, on how the many organizations in the UN system with a science, technology, engineering and humanities mission in the area of sustainability can work together more effectively, avoid mission creep and overlap, and curb counter-productive competition;
 - d) offering recommendations to the Secretary-General on priorities related to science for sustainable development that should be supported or encouraged within or by the UN system, including for the post-2015 development process;
 - e) carrying out relevant intellectual work including providing advice to the UN Secretary-General on up-to-date scientific issues relevant to sustainable development, including advice on "assessments and digests around concepts as 'planetary boundaries', 'tipping points' and 'environmental thresholds'...", as indicated in Recommendation 51 of the report of the GSP. This will allow the Secretary-General to articulate scientific issues which have attracted widespread attention in contemporary affairs;
 - f) identifying knowledge gaps that could be addressed outside the UN system by either national or international research programs, e.g., the emerging 'Future Earth' programme;
 - g) identifying specific assessment needs that could be addressed by ongoing assessments (e.g., IPCC or the IPBES) or new assessments activities to be developed within the UN system;
 - h) advising on issues related to the public visibility and understanding of science;

- i) offering insight on democratic global governance, focussed on sustainability and the responsible and ethical development of science.
 - j) any other matter as may be assigned by the UN Secretary-General.
8. In the first phase of its work, the Board should focus primarily on selected issues arising from the GSP Report, from the Outcome Document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), as well from other large-scale interdisciplinary processes, such as the recent 'Planet Under Pressure' conference and 'Future Earth'.

III. Meetings of the Scientific Advisory Board

9. The first meeting of the Scientific Advisory Board will be chaired by the UN Secretary-General or his representative. For subsequent meetings, the Director-General of UNESCO will act as Chairperson or will propose alternative arrangements for chairing the proceedings. Following each meeting, a written report on the discussions and conclusions will be provided to the UN Secretary-General.
10. *Frequency of meetings*: the Board will normally meet twice a year. If so decided by the Board, sub-committees on specific topics could be established, with a variable frequency of their meetings, which could take place mainly by tele- or video-conference.
11. *Agenda*: the agenda of the first inaugural meeting of the Board will be decided by the UN Secretary-General. The Agenda of the subsequent meetings will be determined by the Board members, with proposals coming from the UN Secretary-General, and, as appropriate, from executive heads of UN organizations and/or their designated focal points to the SAB.
12. *Hearings*: representatives of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, representatives of the scientific boards of the multilateral environmental conventions, chairpersons of the scientific organizations, scientists from the private sector, and other highly qualified experts may be invited by the Board to address it on matters within their competence.
13. *Communications between formal meetings*: a dedicated and secure web-based communication platform will be set up to supplement e-mail exchanges and ensure the sharing of information among the Board members and the designated focal points of the UN organizations concerned.

IV. Composition of the Scientific Advisory Board

14. The Scientific Advisory Board is an international panel composed of approximately 20 eminent scientists representing the main disciplines, systems and sectors related to the multiple dimensions of science for sustainable development.
15. A balanced composition of the Board will be sought in relation to the following:
- high-level expertise in one or many fields of natural, social and human sciences, and engineering in relation to sustainable development;
 - expertise in the following other areas: strengthening the science-policy interface, UN governance of science, R&D in the private sector, science communication;
 - geographical region;
 - gender.

16. UN organizations that are engaged in pursuing scientific activities will be invited to designate focal points to follow the work of the Board and to assure coordinated follow-up where required. Such focal points may be invited to participate in meetings of the Board in the role of Observers.

V. Conditions of appointment to the Board

17. Board members will be appointed in their personal capacity, and not as representatives of their respective States or of any other entities with which they may be affiliated. They will be expected therefore to proffer their advice on a strictly independent basis and to not seek or accept instructions from Governments or other external authorities.
18. Board members will express willingness and availability to carry out the activities of the Board, including attending periodic meetings of the Board.
19. Board members will serve on a *pro bono* basis.
20. All travel, accommodation and related expenses of members connected with participation in Board meetings will be borne by the Secretariat of the Board, host countries or host organisations.
21. The services of Board members will be limited to the duration of the meetings of the Board and the time necessary to travel to and from the meetings to the individual's normal place of residence.
22. Board members are responsible for obtaining their own insurance. The United Nations accepts no responsibility for death, illness or injury of any Board member in an advisory meeting which is not attributable to the performance of services on behalf of the United Nations. Board members are fully responsible for any expenses incurred as a result of such events and for arranging, at their own expense, such life, health and other forms of insurance covering their period of services on behalf of the United Nations as they consider appropriate. A Board member, or his or her dependents as appropriate, shall be entitled in the event of death, injury or illness attributable to the performance of services on behalf of the United Nations to compensation in accordance with the Rules governing compensation to members of Commissions, Committees or similar bodies in the event of death, injury or illness attributable to service with the United Nations (ST/SGB/103/Rev.1).
23. Board members will serve for a period of two years, with the possibility of renewal for one subsequent two-year term at the discretion of the UN Secretary-General. The service of Board members will therefore be limited to four years.

VI. Status of the Board members

24. Board members will serve as advisers to the UN Secretary-General and executive heads of UN agencies on science for sustainability related issues. They will be invited by Letter of the UN Secretary-General and no specific contractual arrangements shall be concluded between the members of the Scientific Advisory Board and the UN. Board members, however, may be given the status of "experts on mission" pursuant to Section 22 of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations of 1946 ("the Convention") as necessary for the independent exercise of their functions during the period of their missions, including the time spent on journey in connection with their missions.

25. If Board members are required to travel on behalf of the United Nations, they may be given a United Nations certificate in accordance with Section 26 of Article VII of the Convention.

26. Expenses incurred by Board members while carrying out Board duties will be covered by extrabudgetary resources, unless otherwise decided.

VII. Secretariat of the Scientific Advisory Board

27. A Secretariat designated by the Director-General of UNESCO will provide technical support to the establishment and functioning of the Board. In particular, the Secretariat will assist the Board in preparation of reports, recommendations and related documents, and in coordinating public information services, and will provide other technical services as needed. The Secretariat shall also ensure the sharing of information as well as consultation and coordination with the Office of the UN Secretary-General and relevant UN organizations, through their designated focal points.

VIII. Financial aspects

28. Activities pertaining to the Board and meetings of the Board shall be covered financially by the Secretariat of the Board. Resource mobilization activities will be developed by the Secretariat of the Board.