



**Governing Council
Sixty-Seventh Session**

GC/67/4
20 March 2025

Lyon, Nouveau Centre, 6-8 May 2025

**DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM THE 61ST SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL**

1. The Scientific Council (SC) of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has the essential roles of advising the Director and the Governing Council (GC) on the Agency's scientific strategy and its implementation and evaluating the scientific quality of the research carried out at IARC through the participation of its members in the Review Panels.
2. Dialogues with and between the two Councils is promoted through regular teleconferences between the Director and the GC and SC Chairs and Vice-Chairs, and by the Chair's attendance of the other Council's sessions.
3. The Sixty-first Session of the Scientific Council (SC) of IARC, held remotely, was opened by Dr Luis Felipe Ribeiro Pinto (SC Chairperson), at 12:00 on Wednesday 12 February 2025. He welcomed Professor Norbert Ifrah (GC Chairperson, who attended the meeting remotely), Dr Sirpa Heinävaara, Vice-Chairperson of the SC, and all participants.
4. The following sections of this document present a summary of the actions taken in response to the discussions and recommendations made during the 61st Session of the SC that are not addressed, either in the Report for the SC, or elsewhere on the agenda of the current GC session.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

5. The Scientific Council congratulated the Director and her staff on the scientific achievements.
6. The SC expressed serious concerns that funding for the *IARC Monographs* Programme may be at risk. The *Monographs* Programme is fundamental to IARC's mission of identifying the causes of cancer and disseminating scientific information. The IARC Director emphasized the urgent need to diversify the sources of funding for this programme, anticipating a funding gap of €7 million over the next 5 years for this programme, as it is expected that the funding from the US National Institute of Health, which has covered 60% of the IARC Monograph expenses over the last 40 years, will cease before end of 2025. This significant funding gap poses a substantial challenge to IARC's ability to continue the critical work of the *Monographs* Programme. The Secretariat is working on developing targeted funding packages for potential donors more inclined to support specific thematic areas and emphasized that by far the best and preferred option remains regular contributions from multiple Participating States increasing IARC Regular Budget, ensuring independence and preventing conflicts of interest.
7. The Director expresses gratitude to the SC for their positive and constructive feedback.

EVALUATION REPORT OF THE IARC MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY (MTS) 2021–2025

8. The SC reaffirmed IARC's strong scientific and operational performance, as well as its impactful research worldwide, paving the way for the development of the MTS 2026–2030 this year. The SC noted that the implementation of the MTS 2021–2025 according to four fundamental priorities is a relevant model corresponding to the value chain of cancer research and prevention continuum.

9. Health economics is a crucial research area for IARC, and the SC recommended that IARC seek alternative funding sources to strengthen this program, as well as alternative global collaborations with centres that have the micro- and macroeconomic expertise. The SC suggested the creation of a working group of interested SC members and IARC personnel to develop and advance efficient models of capacity building capitalizing on international partnerships and collaborations. The Director thanks the SC for its constructive recommendations. In response, the Secretariat will explore all possibilities (recruitment, external collaboration, and the establishment of a Working Group including health economists) to strengthen this crucial work programme, which is a priority of the IARC MTS.

10. The SC emphasized the importance of implementation research, particularly in areas such as HPV vaccination and screening strategies, and recommended that it be further strengthened and consolidated in the next MTS. The Director confirms that implementation research remains a priority for IARC and will be integrated into Pillar 3 of IARC in the next MTS 2026–2030.

11. The SC inquired about potential new research areas to be included in the next MTS. The potential inclusion of new research programs will be guided by the evaluation of the current MTS and the recommendations derived from the reviews of various IARC Branches during its implementation. In response, the Director states that the development of new research programmes in the new MTS 2026–2030, such as One Health and the impact of climate change on cancer, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), will depend on the availability of budgetary resources.

12. The Director thanks the SC for their constructive feedback.

REQUEST FOR SUPPORT FROM THE GOVERNING COUNCIL SPECIAL FUND. COMPUTING INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE IARC SCIENTIFIC IT PLATFORM

13. The SC recommended that GC approve the allocation of €250 000 from the GC Special Fund (GCSF) to purchase new computing servers, including some with high-performance graphics processing unit (GPU) designed for artificial intelligence analyses, as well as general infrastructure (network, power supply, cables) and maintenance of the servers for a period of five years.

14. In response, the Director thanks the SC for their support of this crucial request for IARC.

REGULAR UPDATE ON IARC INITIATIVE FOR RESILIENCE IN CANCER CONTROL (IRCC) (formerly IARC-C19)

15. The SC queried how IARC plans to respond in the event of another pandemic or crisis. In response, the Secretariat emphasized that IARC will work closely with WHO headquarters and Regional Offices to develop a comprehensive framework of tailored recommendations, designed to address specific local contexts and needs, ensuring a swift and effective response when required.

16. In response, the Director thanks the SC for their continued support for this initiative.

UPDATE – IARC@60 Anniversary

17. In the context of the IARC@60 Anniversary, a visibility campaign will be launched, running from 2025 to 2026 to raise awareness of IARC's core mission, and a large-scale scientific conference will close the one-year campaign. The SC noted the invitation to provide feedback and suggestions to support the Secretariat in making this campaign a success.

18. In response, the Director thanks and sincerely appreciates the SC's enthusiastic support for this initiative, which is invaluable to its success.

PROPOSED PROGRAMME AND BUDGET (2026–2027)

19. The SC acknowledged that the requested increase in the Assessed Contribution of a total of €1.9 million for the biennium 2026–2027 is fully justified to partially cover the statutory staff cost increase, while observing with concern the proposed cut of €1.5 million in the activity budget for the biennium. The SC inquired about the potential impact on IARC if the proposed budget increase is not approved by the GC. In response, the Director states that it would be compelled to further streamline scientific priorities and deprioritize certain programmes.

20. The SC expressed concerns that one of the core programmes of IARC, i.e. "Pillar 1-Data for Action", appears to be underbudgeted. The Secretariat acknowledged the concern and emphasized that, given the current budget constraints, diverting additional regular budget resources to Pillar 1 would inevitably impact other areas of IARC's research. The Secretariat also highlighted the challenge of securing competitive grant funding for this Pillar, as its deliverables and outcomes are considered "global public goods" and often do not align with the specific criteria of external grant calls. The Secretariat is eager to work closely with the SC to seek guidance on overcoming these challenges.

21. The SC recommended that the Governing Council approves the Proposed Programme and Budget (2026–2027), including the regular budget or assessed contribution of €53.5 million, as it is vital for the successful implementation of the core programme as well as the 10 Flagships as indicated in the Proposed Programme and Budget.

22. In response, the Director expressed gratitude for the SC's strong support.

SCIENTIFIC REPORT OF THE EPIGENOMICS AND MECHANISMS (EGM) BRANCH REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

23. The Director thanked the Review Panel and the SC for the excellent quality of their review and recommendations and noted with satisfaction the high rating received by the Branch, reflecting the outstanding/forefront quality of the past work and future plans of the EGM Branch, as well as the perfect fit with the Agency's mission and strategy.

24. For the future plans, the Review Panel recommended that the EGM Branch develops a full-scale prioritization of their strategic goals, i.e. they need to specify what will be continued and what must be cut in a less well-funded future, based on mission priorities. Clear prioritization will allow Branch leadership to feel more ownership of their direction and improve competitiveness for external funding opportunities.

25. The Director thanks the Review Panel for their in-depth review, and commended Dr Zdenko Herceg, Branch Head, and Dr Jiri Zavadil, Deputy Branch Head, as well as all members of the Branch, for their outstanding work.

26. Responses to the comments and recommendations from the Review Panel have been approved and will be addressed over the coming year. The Director will report back on these actions at the next session of the SC in 2026.

SCIENTIFIC REPORT OF THE EARLY DETECTION, PREVENTION AND INFECTIONS (EPR) BRANCH REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

27. The Director thanked the Review Panel and the SC for the excellent quality of their review and recommendations and noted with satisfaction the high rating received by the Branch, reflecting the outstanding quality of the past work and future plans of the EPR Branch, as well as the perfect fit with the Agency's mission and strategy.

28. The overall recommendations for the EPR Branch were discussed and approved. In response, the Director thanks the Review Panel for their tremendous review, and commended Branch Head, Dr Partha Basu, Drs André Carvalho and Gary Clifford, Deputy Branch Heads, as well as the members of the EPR Branch, for their outstanding work.

29. Responses to the comments and recommendations from the Review Panel have been approved and will be addressed over the coming year. The Director will report back on these actions at the next session of the SC in 2026.