



DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 62ND SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION

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. The Sixty-second Session of the SC of IARC was opened by Dr Sirpa Heinävaara (SC Chairperson), at 09:00 on Wednesday 11 February 2026. She welcomed the participants, including the seven new SC members: Drs Mohamad Ussama Alhomsy (Qatar), Robert Barouki (France), Mariana Emerenciano (Brazil), Lúcio José de Lara Santos (Portugal), Henrik Hjalgrim (Denmark), Rayjean Hung (Canada), and Eva Schernhammer (Austria).
3. The following sections of this document present a summary of the actions taken in response to the discussions and recommendations made during the 62nd 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 INCLUDING THE IARC BIENNIAL REPORT 2024–2025

4. The Scientific Council congratulated the Director and her staff on the Director's Report and scientific achievements outlined in the IARC Biennial Report 2024–2025.
5. The Director expresses gratitude to the SC for their positive and constructive feedback.

DIRECTOR'S UPDATE FROM THE 62nd SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

6. The representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) emphasized the strengthened collaboration between IARC and WHO, commended IARC on the great impact it already has had on policy and look forward to creating additional impact by joint collaborative efforts.
7. The Director welcomes and sincerely appreciates the remarks from the representative of WHO. The strengthened collaboration between IARC and WHO reflects our shared commitment to advancing evidence-based cancer prevention and control globally. IARC is proud that its work is already contributing to policy development across WHO Member States, and we recognize that this impact is greatly amplified

through close partnership with WHO. We look forward to deepening our joint efforts, ensuring that high-quality scientific evidence continues to inform global, regional, and national actions to reduce the burden of cancer. Strengthening this collaboration remains a strategic priority for the Agency, and we remain fully committed to delivering meaningful and measurable impact together.

8. The SC recognizes and appreciates the substantial contribution the United States of America has made for the last 44 years to the *Monographs* programme. This decades-long continuity of the programme has made a significant global impact. The SC noted it would be a fundamental loss if the IARC *Monographs* Programme was not further supported, not least considering its unique position of authority and independence in cancer prevention and occupational health promotion. Also, the SC notes the past and ongoing efforts of the IARC Secretariat to secure additional funding to the *Monographs* programme.

9. The SC recommends additional coordination with national/regional agencies to harmonize efforts in hazard evaluation. The Director confirmed that the *Monographs* Programme is actively pursuing funding opportunities for the coming years. Subject to availability of resources, an update of the Preamble to the *Monographs* is also anticipated, ensuring that the Programme continues to incorporate the latest scientific and methodological advances in cancer hazard identification. In light of the above, the SC strongly urges the GC to take decisive action to secure sustainable funding for the *Monographs* programme, recognizing its indispensable role in protecting public health worldwide.

10. The Director warmly acknowledges and deeply appreciates the SC's recognition of the substantial and decades-long contribution of the United States of America to the IARC *Monographs* Programme. This long-standing partnership has been instrumental in ensuring the Programme's independence, scientific rigor, and global influence on cancer prevention and occupational health. The Director shares the SC's view that the IARC *Monographs* occupy a uniquely authoritative role in global hazard identification, and that their continuity is of fundamental importance to public health worldwide.

11. The Secretariat is fully committed to safeguarding the future of the Programme. The Secretariat continues to actively pursue additional and diversified funding opportunities, and the Director welcomes the SC's recognition of these sustained efforts. Subject to resource availability, the Secretariat intends to update the Preamble to ensure that the programme continues to reflect the latest scientific, methodological, and procedural advances in carcinogen hazard assessment.

12. Regarding coordination with national and regional agencies, the Programme is seeking to expand its collaborations to support greater methodological harmonization in hazard evaluations. Strengthening these partnerships enhances transparency, fosters alignment in global cancer prevention efforts, and allows the Programme to continue to serve as a trusted and unbiased scientific resource for governments and public health authorities.

13. In light of these considerations, The Director joins the SC in strongly encouraging the GC to take decisive action to secure long-term, sustainable funding for the IARC *Monographs* Programme. Ensuring its continuation is essential not only for maintaining the scientific excellence and independence of the Programme, but also for supporting evidence-based policies that protect populations from carcinogenic exposures worldwide.

14. The Director expresses gratitude to the SC for their supportive and constructive feedback.

BIENNIAL REPORT ON IARC EDUCATION AND TRAINING activities, 2024–2025

15. The SC congratulated the Director and IARC staff for the report on Education and Training Activities.
16. The SC made the following comments/suggestions/recommendations:
 - Expressed appreciation for the support to early-career scientists, students and postdoctoral scientists around the world;
 - Highlighted that the courses programme should continue to be developed hand in hand with the Human Resources Office, looking at emerging needs for planning upcoming learning courses;
 - Commended the global collaboration with different organizations and encouraged seeking additional collaborations internationally, thus positioning IARC for even greater impact;
 - Suggested continuing and expanding partnerships around the world with universities to offer IARC learning modules as coursework (e.g. Master's of Public Health programmes, teaching toolkits) and with other entities (e.g. the oncology community, about prevention), including showcasing how IARC learning resources can be integrated into the university curriculum.
17. The Director is grateful for the SC's thoughtful advice regarding the future development and sustainability of the IARC Education and Training programme. The Secretariat deeply appreciates the SC's recognition of the Agency's strong and continued support for early-career scientists, students, and postdoctoral researchers worldwide. Building capacity globally remains central to IARC's mission, and we are committed to ensuring that our programmes continue to provide high-quality, accessible learning opportunities.
18. The Director fully agrees with the SC's recommendation to continue developing the courses programme in close collaboration with the Human Resources Office. This coordination is essential to ensure that our training portfolio remains responsive to emerging scientific and organizational needs, and that it supports strategic workforce planning within the Agency.
19. The Director also welcomes the SC's encouragement to expand international collaborations. Strengthening partnerships with global organizations enhances the reach and impact of IARC's training activities and helps us leverage complementary expertise. As the Secretariat seeks additional external resources—from Participating States, foundations, and other partners—these collaborations will play a key role in sustaining and growing the programme.
20. In addition, the Director appreciates the SC's suggestion to broaden partnerships with universities and other educational institutions. Integrating IARC learning modules into academic coursework, including Master of Public Health programmes and specialized teaching toolkits, offers a powerful avenue to increase the reach of our materials and to ensure that evidence-based cancer prevention is embedded in formal training pathways. We see great potential in further developing these collaborations and demonstrating the ways in which IARC resources can be incorporated into university curricula and professional training. The Agency remains committed to maintaining and strengthening the Education and Training programme, and we are actively exploring opportunities to secure the additional support needed to sustain its development and global impact
21. The Director expresses gratitude to the SC for their positive and constructive feedback.

REQUEST FOR SUPPORT FROM THE GOVERNING COUNCIL SPECIAL FUND. A. SCIENTIFIC EQUIPMENT AND B. AUTOMATION SOFTWARE FOR IARC PUBLICATION

22. The SC recommended that GC approve the allocation of €788 200 from the GCSF to purchase four pieces of equipment identified as essential (dedicated biobanking LIMS system; automated tube labelling and aliquoting system; dedicated LIMS for Histopathology, and a new liquid nitrogen tank), for a total of €718 200; and an automation software for IARC publications for a total of €70 000.
23. The Director thanks the SC for their supportive feedback.

SCIENTIFIC FOCUS: LABORATORY-BASED RESEARCH

24. The SC noted with interest the development of urine biomarkers (e.g. TERT promoter mutations) for the early detection of bladder cancer, through next-generation sequencing, in both high- and low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Key steps towards clinical application to advance non-invasive diagnostics of bladder cancer are underway noted the challenge to translate technically advanced techniques to LMICs in the context of TERT mutation detection versus cytology. In the context of being a WHO agency, challenges and additional considerations with licensing and patenting were discussed as routes for clinical implementation.
25. The SC recommended to monitor the development of techniques mentioned above to safeguard routes to clinical and policy implementation of this very promising project.
26. The Director appreciates the SC's thoughtful observations regarding the promising advances in urine-based biomarkers for the early detection and monitoring of bladder cancer. These developments, implemented and validated across diverse settings—including LMICs—represent an important step toward more accessible, non-invasive diagnostic tools.
27. In the context of discussions around licensing and patenting pathways, especially as potential routes to clinical implementation, The Director wishes to reiterate that while scientific innovation at IARC has led to the development of highly sensitive assays—such as multiplex ddPCR methods for detecting TERT promoter mutations—**IARC, as a WHO agency, does not hold internal expertise in patent development nor does it engage in commercialization activities.**
28. The Director agrees with the SC on the importance of monitoring the evolution of these technologies to ensure that pathways to clinical and policy implementation remain open and aligned with IARC's public-health mission. As part of ongoing efforts, the Agency continues to follow scientific, regulatory, and methodological developments closely, including emerging biomarker comparisons, health-technology assessments, and feasibility evaluations in LMICs.
29. The Director thanks the SC for their constructive feedback.

REGULAR UPDATE ON IRCC INITIATIVE FOR RESILIENCE IN CANCER CONTROL

30. With an estimated economic impact of USD 224 billion in 2025 and over 1.5 million people with cancer—roughly 1 in 12—living in crisis-affected environments, the initiative is essential for IARC to understand how crises disrupt cancer outcomes and to develop strategies that strengthen resilience in cancer control globally.
31. The SC suggested exploring whether IARC could develop intervention packages aimed at mitigating the impact of crises on cancer outcomes.
32. The Director welcomes the SC's suggestion to explore the development of intervention packages aimed at mitigating the impact of crises on cancer outcomes. These could support national cancer control programmes by outlining evidence-informed measures that help maintain continuity of essential cancer services, reduce excess mortality, and reinforce resilience across screening, diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship care.
33. The Secretariat will therefore examine, within available resources, how the IRCC can further evolve to provide structured intervention-oriented outputs, ensuring that the Initiative continues to deliver actionable, science-based guidance to help countries strengthen resilience in cancer control worldwide.
34. The Director thanks the SC for their supportive and constructive feedback.

UPDATE ON DATA SCIENCE ACTIVITIES

35. The Secretariat was requested to update SC and GC on its data science activities on a regular basis, including bioinformatics, biostatistics, and (supporting these areas) Information Technology (IT).
36. The SC recommended that because of limitations of federated learning other ways of data sharing should also be explored.
37. The Secretariat notes the SC's recommendation regarding federated learning. While federated learning offers important advantages for privacy-preserving analysis—particularly under strict data-protection constraints—the SC has rightly highlighted its practical limitations. In line with this recommendation, the Secretariat will continue to explore complementary approaches to data sharing and collaborative analysis that remain compliant with data-protection frameworks while enabling scientific progress. This includes strengthening the Scientific IT (SIT) platform, improving secure data-access mechanisms, and evaluating alternative models for sharing analytical outputs or de-identified datasets in controlled environments.
38. Ensuring that IARC's data science capabilities continue to evolve—through robust IT support, enhanced analytical tools, and secure models for data access—remains a strategic priority. The Secretariat will therefore continue reporting regularly to both the SC and the GC on progress in bioinformatics, biostatistics, and the IT systems that underpin these activities, in line with the SC's recommendation.
39. The Director thanks the SC for their constructive feedback.

UPDATE ON IARC@60 ANNIVERSARY

40. The SC noted the details regarding the registrations and content of the different sessions proposed and expressed its appreciation to the Secretariat for the organization of this major event. The importance of this conference under current times of financial distress was noted. It was stressed that both social and traditional media channels should be used for communication and to invite key stakeholders. The Secretariat responded reassuringly to these points.
41. The Director thanks the SC for their positive feedback.

SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL FEEDBACK ON E-POSTERS

42. The SC appreciated the exercise and thanked the Director and her staff on the very informative ePoster session. The SC congratulated the young scientists for their presentations.
43. Given that the 63rd Session of the SC (SC/63) will be held remotely, the Secretariat suggests that flash-talks (recorded videos) be held online, early December 2026, as was done in the past for sessions of the SC held fully remotely.
44. The Director thanks the SC for their positive and constructive feedback.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS: "CO-CREATING THE FUTURE OF CANCER RESEARCH"

45. The SC appreciated the exercise and thanked the Director and her staff on the very interactive discussion.
46. The Director thanks the SC for their positive and constructive feedback.

PRESENTATION OF THE MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY (MTS) (2026–2030), INCLUDING THE PRIORITIZATION SCENARIO

47. The Director gave key messages for presenting IARC's MTS 2026–2030, explaining why the new strategy matters, how it was developed, and how it will be implemented and prioritized.
48. All comments raised by the SC were addressed by the Director.
49. The SC congratulated the Director on a well-prepared MTS.
50. The Director thanks the SC for its engagement and reiterates that the MTS reflects not only the global cancer landscape and IARC's mission, but also the Agency's ambition to better connect research with action and to deliver measurable, equitable impact.

SCIENTIFIC REPORT OF THE GENOMIC EPIDEMIOLOGY (GEM) BRANCH REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

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

52. The overall recommendations for the GEM Branch were discussed and approved. In response, the Director thanks the Review Panel for their tremendous review, and commends Branch Head, Dr Paul Brennan, and Dr James McKay, Deputy Branch Head, as well as the members of the GEM Branch, for their outstanding work.

53. 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 2027.