

PROCEDURE FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE IARC MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY (2021–2025) INCLUDING AN EVALUATION OF IARC

1. The Governing Council approves the IARC Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) on a five-year cycle. The MTS defines the overall scope of the Agency's activities and includes an implementation plan for each of the scientific and administrative units of the organization.
2. The IARC Programme and Budget (P&B) is approved on a two-year cycle and describes the individual projects to be conducted and their attributed finances. All of the individual projects detailed in the P&B are mapped to the IARC Project Tree, which is an Annex to the MTS. The Project Tree provides, therefore, a logical framework for integrating the project activities with the overarching principles of IARC's vision, articulated through the MTS.
3. The Governing (GC) and Scientific Councils (SC) evaluate IARC's performance against the MTS. An evaluation is underway at the mid-point of the current MTS (2016–2020). This evaluation permits an overview of how the different parts of the Agency's activities combine and enables a view to be formulated on the balance achieved across those different activities. The timing of this mid-term evaluation permits the analysis to be used in formulating the subsequent MTS.
4. The research activities of the Agency are evaluated through a variety of additional procedures that differ in scope and time interval, providing considerable flexibility and breadth in terms of review. These include annual reporting to the GC by the Director on a standard set of Key Performance Indicators; in-depth peer-review of each research Group and Section on a five-year cycle; annual reviews by the SC of selected topics; peer-review of scientific publications and grant applications when submitted; additional reviews on specific topics through ad hoc mechanisms such as advisory groups, working groups etc.

Timeline for development of the MTS (2021–2025)

5. The current MTS runs from 2016–2020; it is scheduled that the next MTS will cover the period 2021–2025. This would necessitate the MTS 2021–2025 being submitted to the SC by mid-December 2019, for discussion in January 2020 (56th session) and adoption by the GC in May 2020 (62nd session).
6. The above timeline would mean the full procedure to develop the next MTS (public consultation with different stakeholders, deliberations of joint GC/SC Working Group, evaluation with participation of external experts, as originally proposed by Finland and adopted by the GC, see below) would need to be accomplished within the first year of the incoming Director's first term of office. This timeline is considered by the Secretariat to be unrealistic.

7. Given the incoming Director arrives in January 2019, the Secretariat proposes adopting the MTS 2021–2025 at the 63rd session of the GC in May 2021, with the Agency working within the scope of the existing MTS for an extra five months. This would permit the incoming Director time to consult fully on the development of the new strategy. The P&B (2022–2023) would be adopted at the same session of the GC in May 2021. The start of the new MTS would also coincide with the Agency occupying the “Nouveau Centre” in mid-2021.

8. The SC is asked to advise the GC on the advantages and disadvantages of this alternative timeline for the MTS 2021–2025 (i.e. adoption in 2021 rather than 2020) in the context of enabling the optimal timetable for preparation of the new strategy.

Process for development of the MTS (2021–2025)

9. The process to develop the MTS is decided by the GC, with implementation by the Secretariat. The previous MTS development comprised several steps, overseen by a Joint GC/SC Working Group which included representation from WHO HQ, as well as consultation with SC and GC members and a wide range of external stakeholders.

10. In preparing the MTS (2021–2025) the Secretariat proposes the following components:

- Establish a Joint GC/SC MTS Working Group (WG) including representation from WHO HQ, through adoption of a resolution at the 61st session of the GC in May 2019. The WG would meet face-to-face and remotely during 2019–2020.
- Conduct a wide public consultation with stakeholders, including leading cancer experts in relevant fields, relevant professional groups and societies, civil society and concerned individuals. The consultation could involve a mixture of one-to-one interviews, open-ended questionnaires, written submissions, webinars and social media tools. Parts of the consultation process may need to be outsourced to market research professionals.
- Conduct an evaluation as proposed in Document [GC/60/12](#) and adopted by Resolution [GC/60/R11](#) through creation of an Advisory Group which would include SC and GC members as well as additional external experts.

11. The Secretariat would use the information from the three sources above to draft the MTS (2021–2025) for review and comment by the Joint GC/SC MTS Working Group prior to consideration by the full SC in 2021.

12. The comments of the SC would be taken into account in preparing the final MTS (2021–2025) submission for consideration by the GC at its 63rd session in 2021.

13. The above process aims to ensure the major themes of the Agency's strategy reflect the views of the wider community of cancer researchers, IARC collaborators and those who use IARC's research, including policymakers.

14. In order to permit the SC and GC to consider the proposal in 2021, the consultation, evaluation process and drafting of the MTS (2021–2025) would be conducted between January and December 2020.

15. During 2019 the incoming Director would analyse the current position and formulate future plans through internal discussions, scientific retreats, consultation with IARC personnel and drawing any external expertise needed in specific areas of activity.

Request for evaluation

16. In 2017, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland sent a document to the Director, IARC suggesting an external evaluation of IARC be undertaken, focusing on the Agency's role in the international cancer research environment (see Document [GC/60/12](#)).

17. The Ministry noted that following such an evaluation "its recommendations could be taken into consideration in the formulation of the Agency's medium-term strategy for the years 2021–2025."

18. The GC discussed the proposal at its 60th session and requested (in Resolution [GC/60/R11](#)):

- "that an evaluation on the topics raised in the Finnish proposal be included into the preparation of the IARC Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) for 2021–2025 and be carried out by external experts, Governing Council and Scientific Council members".
- "the Secretariat to prepare a document that describes the scope and terms of reference to be used for this evaluation, to be discussed at the next session of the Scientific Council and to be submitted to the Governing Council at its 61st session in May 2019".
- "the Secretariat to prepare a document with a detailed procedure for preparation of the MTS for 2021–2025, incorporating the evaluation options and a timetable".

19. The additional evaluation is to be funded from the Governing Council Special Fund as per Resolution [GC/60/R11](#).

Proposed evaluation: scope, composition and process

20. The proposed evaluation seeks a broad strategic overview by Participating States of the Agency's activities in relation both to WHO and to other organizations with a global cancer research remit. The evaluation should focus on what IARC is uniquely placed to do and what IARC can do better than other organizations.

21. The SC should play a central role in any strategic evaluation of the Agency; the proposed evaluation is directly in line with the SC mandate. The GC should also be involved to ensure the evaluation meets the requirements of the proposal adopted by the GC.

22. The Secretariat proposes, therefore, that an Advisory Group is created to conduct the evaluation with the following composition:

- a) The Director IARC, together with members of the Secretariat from IARC (two senior scientists) and WHO (two members nominated by the Director-General).
- b) Four members of the SC representing a range of different disciplines. At least two of the four members should be also members of the Joint GC/SC MTS Working Group.

- c) Four members of the GC representing different geographic regions and drawing on Participating States who have joined the Agency at different periods of its history. At least two of the four members should also be members of the Joint GC/SC MTS Working Group.
- d) Up to eight external experts covering areas of expertise complementary to those in the GC and SC. These could include regulatory science, science policy, health economics, noncommunicable disease control, sustainable human development, international biobanking, resource mobilization (for example in the context of development assistance for health), patient representatives, etc.
- e) All external experts would be invited by the Director IARC after agreement with the GC and SC Chairs and Vice-Chairs and following completion and analysis of a WHO Declaration of Interest.

23. The Joint GC/SC MTS Working Group should define the final detail of the remit of the Advisory Group. However, taking account of the original proposal and subsequent discussion by the GC at its 60th session, the Secretariat has identified the following key areas to be considered in the evaluation:

- the alignment of IARC's activities with its mandate, as described in the Statute and the prioritization of different areas;
- the collaboration between IARC and other parts of WHO to ensure clear definition of roles and effective cooperation and coordination;
- the contribution of multidisciplinary research to IARC's strategy, including the balance of laboratory equipment in-house and accessed through external collaboration;
- the role and infrastructure for the biobank in IARC's research strategy;
- mechanisms to ensure the financial sustainability of IARC's research including the laboratory research and biobank;
- approaches to maximize the value and impact of IARC's work.

24. The terms of reference of the Advisory Group should be decided by the GC but should include:

- to evaluate and advise on IARC's remit and activities in the areas requested by the Joint GC/SC MTS Working Group;
- to provide a report to the Joint GC/SC MTS Working Group on these areas to inform the preparation of the MTS (2021–2025).

25. The Advisory Group would meet once in person, preceded by two remote meetings, the first to plan its work and the second to report on progress. Given the above timing for the MTS submission, the work of the Advisory Group should be conducted during late 2019 and early 2020.

26. The SC is asked to advise the GC on the following points:

- The proposed process and timetable for developing the MTS (2021–2025);
- The proposed scope, composition and process for the evaluation of IARC.