



**Governing Council
Sixty-Sixth Session**

GC/66/6
15 March 2024

*Lyon, 15–16 May 2024
Hybrid format*

DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 60TH 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 60th Session of the IARC SC, the first in-person session after the move to the new premises in Lyon-Gerland, was held from 7 to 9 February 2024. It was opened by Dr Manami Inoue (SC Chairperson), who welcomed Professor Norbert Ifrah (GC Chairperson, who attended the meeting remotely). The following sections of this document present a summary of the actions taken in response to the discussions and recommendations made during the 60th 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.

DISCUSSION WITH THE DIRECTOR, THE DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE (AD INTERIM) AND THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ONLY ON "IARC CHALLENGES"

4. The situation vis-à-vis the outstanding assessed contributions from the Islamic Republic of Iran was discussed in closed session.
5. The SC representative of Qatar agreed to refer to her counterpart in the GC for their feedback regarding potential support to restore the formal dialogue with the Islamic Republic of Iran.
6. The Director thanked the SC and the SC representative of Qatar for their support.

DISCUSSION ON THE EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT OF THE IARC MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY (MTS) 2021–2025 AND ITS WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP

7. The Secretariat mentioned that in May 2021, the GC requested the Director to make a proposal for an evaluation approach of the MTS for 2021–2025.
8. A dedicated Working Group (WG) will review the draft report on the evaluation of the MTS 2021–2025 and provide its recommendations to the SC in February 2025 and to the GC in May 2025. The Secretariat welcomed two IARC SC members as part of the Joint GC/SC MTS WG for the evaluation of the MTS 2021–2025. The SC nominated Pål Richard Romundstad and Luis Felipe Ribeiro Pinto to be part of the WG.

9. The director warmly thanked the members of the SC for their involvement and dedication and for their interest in the activities of the Working Group.

PREPARATION OF THE IARC MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY (MTS) 2026–2030 AND ITS ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERSHIP

10. The preparation of the MTS 2026–2030 will rely on a process of consultation which will start during the GC session in May 2024. The development of the new MTS will run in parallel with the MTS 2021–2025 evaluation to better consider and integrate its conclusions and recommendations.

11. The Secretariat welcomed two IARC SC members as part of the Joint GC/SC MTS Advisory Group for the development of the MTS 2026–2030. The SC nominated Satish Gopal and Louisa Gordon to be part of the Joint GC/SC & WHO/HQ MTS Advisory Group for the development of the MTS 2026–2030.

12. The director warmly thanked the members of the SC for their involvement and dedication and for their interest in the activities of the Advisory Group.

UPDATE ON DATA SCIENCE ACTIVITIES – INCLUDING SCIENTIFIC IT PLATFORM

13. The Secretariat was requested to update SC and GC on its data science activities on a regular basis, including computational biology, bioinformatics, biostatistics, and (supporting these areas) Information Technology (IT).

14. An update was given by the Secretariat on behalf of the IARC Data Science Steering Committee (DSSC) that oversees the data science activities, including bioinformatics, biostatistics, computational biology, and scientific information technology. The DSSC is composed of three working groups (WG): the bioinformatics WG, the biostatistics WG, and the IT WG.

15. The Scientific Council made several observations regarding the development of the Scientific IT platform and related cybersecurity concerns: support for Platform Development, Cybersecurity Measures, Resource Needs, Data Sharing Hub, Open Artificial Intelligence Systems, and Dynamic Patient Consent.

16. In response, the Director confirmed that all these points have already been taken into consideration, measures implemented to address cybersecurity concerns, and warmly thanked the members of the SC for their constructive remarks.

DISCUSSION ON THE REPORT ON IARC'S VISION FOR OPEN SCIENCE

17. IARC aims to follow the principle of being “as open as possible, as closed as necessary”, seeking to reconcile the ethos of open science with the complex realities of the research environment. Under this principle, any restrictions on openness are not the default but are exceptions based on justifiable obligations.

18. Overall, the SC emphasized the importance of accessibility, openness, funding, data sharing, and re-evaluation of traditional metrics to enhance the impact of cancer research publications.

19. The Director thanked the members of the SC for their constructive remarks.

COVID-19 AND CANCER INITIATIVE: A BUILDING BACK BETTER PROPOSAL (IARC-C19)

20. As requested by the GC in May 2022, Dr Freddie Bray, Cancer Surveillance (CSU) Branch Head, and Dr Isabelle Soerjomataram, CSU Deputy Branch Head, presented an update of the IARC-C19 initiative which aims to inform IARC's Participating States on mitigation and recovery strategies.

21. The Secretariat thanked the Australian Department of Health and the United Kingdom Medical Research Council who have contributed to the IARC-C19 project. Over one fifth of the requested fund has been invested to IARC. IARC will proceed based on a stepwise manner focusing the activities on one main cancer type and seek council on priority research area from the SC.

22. The SC recommended to change the name of the initiative as it is no longer strongly related to COVID. Suggestions made included terms like "health resilience" and "health planning" to encompass a broader concept of health services disruptions by various causes. The Secretariat thanked the SC for their valuable recommendation and affirmed its commitment to exploring a new name that aligns with the provided suggestions.

23. The SC stressed the importance of this work and congratulated IARC on its progress to date in this area.

24. The Director thanked the SC for their positive comments and their continued support for this initiative.

MAXIMIZING THE IMPACT OF IARC: DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY "CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF IARC RESEARCH" ([Document SC/60/8](#))

25. To maximize the visibility of the Agency and deliver on the expected results, as defined in the Communication and Dissemination Strategy, IARC is embarking on a new journey by creating a year-long campaign to celebrate its 60th anniversary that will culminate in the organization of a Grand Scientific Conference in May 2026.

26. The SC appreciated the concept and offered suggestions and support (sharing of knowledge, materials, dissemination) in implementing this initiative.

27. The Director warmly thanked the SC for their constructive remarks and their support in implementing this initiative.

SCIENTIFIC REPORT OF THE EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS AND CLASSIFICATION (ESC) BRANCH REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

28. 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 ESC Branch, as well as the perfect fit with the Agency's mission and strategy.

29. The Director congratulated Dr Mary Schubauer-Berigan and the Deputy Branch Heads, as well as all members of the Branch, for this outstanding review.

30. Responses to the comments and recommendations from the Review Panel have been approved and will be addressed over the coming year. The Director thanked the Review Panel for their tremendous work and will report back on these actions at the next session of the SC in 2025.