



## PANEL DISCUSSION

### “THE RIGHT TO ENJOY SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS, AND THE FREEDOM INDISPENSABLE FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH”

30<sup>th</sup> June 2017, 11.00am-13.00pm  
Conference Room XXVII  
Palais des Nations of the UN

### CONCEPT-NOTE

Freedom and responsibility are the proverbial two sides of the science medal. Norms, policies and agreements regulating science, whether at the national or international level, must achieve multiple goals simultaneously, including letting scientist carry out their work; ensuring transparent public and private support of research; guaranteeing the free circulation of their discoveries and data; creating free and verifiable peer-review processes; and guaranteeing the application of research in all possible fields always in full respect of the highest human rights standards. Scholars, practitioners and lately human rights activists, are urging a comprehensive reflection on implication of the "right to science" and to find ways to promote it.

In the light of “the right to share scientific advancements” and the evolutionary interpretation of the relation between science and human rights, debates on scientific freedom, including its potential and/or effective impact on individuals and society at large, should take momentum.

#### **Background note**

The “implementation of the right to enjoy scientific progress and the freedom indispensable for scientific research” emanate from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Specifically, Article 15 of ICESCR sets forth “1. the right of everyone: (a) To take part in cultural life; (b) To enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications; (c) To benefit from the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author. 2. The steps to be taken by the States Parties to the present Covenant to achieve the full realization of this right shall include those necessary for the conservation, the development and the diffusion of science and culture. 3. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to respect the freedom indispensable for scientific research and creative activity. 4. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the benefits to be derived from the encouragement and development of international contacts and co-operation in the scientific and cultural fields”.

Given the progress and advances in the scientific sector, “the implementation of the right to enjoy scientific progress and the freedom indispensable for scientific research” calls for renewed attention on the need to promote and protect scientific freedom and create the general economic, social, cultural and legal conditions to foster its most beneficial impact on the welfare and well being of humanity.

Within UNESCO, it has been recognized “that research on the human genome and the resulting applications open up vast prospects for progress in improving the health of individuals and of humankind as a whole, but emphasizing that such research should fully respect human dignity, freedom and human rights, as well as the prohibition of all forms of discrimination”<sup>1</sup>. A joint expert seminar co-organized by UNESCO in 2009 adopted the Venice Statement on the Right to Enjoy the Benefits of Scientific Progress, which indicates that: “The ongoing process of science has different meanings and implications in different contexts and may pose significant challenges for human rights in the world today. The processes, products and applications of science should be used for the benefit of all humanity without discrimination, particularly with regard to disadvantaged and marginalized persons and communities”.

The former UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights, Farida Shaheed, focused her annual report-2012 (A/HRC20/26) on, inter alia, “the normative content of the right to benefit from scientific progress and its application”.

Scientific research is at the core of the activities of WHO, one of the most important technical agencies of the UN system where each department has its own research unit. While producing strictly evidence-based recommendations and guidelines, WHO's action clearly illustrates the benefits for all that are involved in enjoying the right to science.

## PROGRAMME

### Welcome and introductory remarks

H.E. *Maurizio Enrico Luigi Serra*, Permanent Representative, Mission of Italy to the UN  
Ms. *Filomena Gallo*, Secretary Associazione Luca Coscioni

### Interventions

Dr. *Flavia Bustreo*, Assistant Director General for Family, Women’s and Children’s Health  
World Health Organization  
*Marco Cappato*, former MEP, Treasurer Associazione Luca Coscioni  
*Prof. Yvonne Donders*, University of Amsterdam  
*Prof. Andrea Boggio*, Bryant University  
*Dr. Stephen Minger*, SLM Blue Skies Innovations Ltd  
*Dr. Vittoria Brambilla*, University of Milan  
*Marco Perduca*, Former Senator, Associazione Luca Coscioni

### BADGES

All attendees **who do not hold a UN badge** are kindly requested to send us their first name, last name and affiliated organization at [fabio.signori@esteri.it](mailto:fabio.signori@esteri.it) , by Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2017 and to bring their valid ID to the Pregny entrance on the day of the event.

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<sup>1</sup> Henk A.M.J. ten Have and Michèle S. Jean (eds.), *The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights. Background, principles and application*, UNESCO, Paris, 2009.