Additional information to assist discussion on other issues arising from last year's meetings with the heads of delegation on aspects related to SC transparency and processes

CHAIR, VICE-CHAIR AND CONVENORS

In addition to the discussion on the current mechanism on how the SC budget is constructed (see SC/65b/SCP04), at the last year meetings with the Head of Delegations discussed a number of issues with wider policy implications. In order to avoid repetition of the same discussion, this document provides some potentially useful information. In particular, the following items related to transparency and SC processes are considered:

- Visibility/Accessibility of mechanisms of SC processes.

- Guidelines on funding research projects.

- The role of the heads of delegation.

- SC 'intellectual independency'.

- SC chair's autonomy on organizational decisions.

Last year, some Heads of Delegation felt that the SC Chair and Convenors did not have sufficient guidance on how prioritise the SC work and budget in relation to the Commission's ongoing evolution of priorities. This is an important issue. As detailed in SCWPX, there is a process in place for the Commission to review the Committee's workplan and proposed budget each time it meets. The Commission also has provided guidance over the years in the form of Resolutions and comments in the Commission's Chair's report when it wishes the Committee to consider new or modified items. The Commission should be greatly assisted in this matter now that (a) it meets biennially and (b) the SC and Commission meetings are now at least two months apart so that Commissioners receive the SC's reports well in advance.

It also seems important that if the SC is to fulfil its role as a *scientific* advisory body, the SC should continue to rely on advice from the Commission as it has been received in Commission reports and resolutions; for many reasons it should not be the role of SC members to spend long periods engaging in discussions of interpretations of what the Commission might want it to do in the future in terms of changed priorities. This could, and probably would, lead to inconclusive discussions and might even lead to potentially damaging politicisation of the SC and its agenda. The only body that can make such decisions is the Commission.

The SC Chair is admitted to the Commission's plenary (and with respect to the budget, subsidiary bodies such as the budgetary sub-committee and the F&A Committee) to explain the SC deliberations (including workplan and budget) and note all new requests/changes by the Commission during its meeting. The SC Chair (and Convenors as her/his support) can consider major changes to the SC's broad agenda only when they are codified/approved by the whole Commission. The detail as to how the SC addresses these broad issues is the responsibility of the Chair in consultation with the Committee.

Transparency and process
 At least some concerns over transparency and process stem from either poor communication of processes being followed and/or lack of familiarity with the existing information on processes. Some suggested improvements are given below.

Publicise the Committee's processes and reiterate them:

The way the SC agenda/workplan and budget are formed is included in the SC RoP/Handbook and has its roots in Commission resolutions and recommendations. An important step towards increased transparency entails a better 'advertisement' on how the SC deals with all above issues and on all steps of the process. This could perhaps be improved if all steps of the existing process are published in an easily found and understood form online (especially for the benefit of non-SC members and the Commission). In addition, whilst this information is available online as part of the SC Handbook, consideration could be given to providing SC members with a hard copy of a document summarising the existing framework through which the agenda/workplan and budget are developed. Last year, a 'beginners' guide to the SC was presented by the Head of Science that many 'experienced' SC members said was valuable. It could be extremely useful if that presentation could include a more detailed explanation of the budget/agenda development phase of the SC's work; instead or in addition, if it was believed helpful, the Secretariat could organise a more in-depth

explanation of the existing IWC formal procedures in relation to the issue of preparing agendas and budgets process, for Heads of Delegations and Convenors.

Develop more clear guidelines on how to arrive at an agreed budget request within our existing RoP.

The proposals in SCWP 3 should ensure fuller consideration of the workplan and especially budget within the existing Rules. Sub-group chairs/Convenors shall take more responsibility in ensuring discussions of the prioritisation of research projects within their sub-groups. That an initial overview of the full budget in order to reach a draft 'reduced budget' needs to be undertaken by a small group rather than the entire Plenary seems essential given the breadth of the task in light of the many strands of the SC's work and the enormous variety of ways that the 'cake' can be cut. The Convenors role in developing a draft 'reduced' budget to assist full discussion within the SC seems appropriate as they have been identified by the SC chair to facilitate SC work and as they fully participate in all aspects of the work of their sub-groups. If that role were taken by, say, Heads of Delegation, this could potentially be seen as putting them in an awkward position of potentially being accused of a conflict of interest between national views and the views of the Committee as a whole. This may particularly be the case given the relatively small proportion of member countries that send delegations to the Committee. SCWPx notes that other individuals/groups than the Convenors could produce working papers on a suggested budget for consideration by the Committee. It is important that the discussion document/draft budget (the rationale behind any suggested reductions should be concisely documented) is undertaken as quickly as possible to allow the full Committee time to carefully consider the draft and for the Plenary as a whole to try to reach consensus.

The role of the heads of delegation, SC 'intellectual independency' and SC chair's autonomy on organizational decisions

The concept and role of Heads of Delegation was a relatively recent (in terms of the life of the SC) introduced by a past SC Chair (Doug De Master) as a way to handle a particularly controversial election of the new vice-chair in a then highly polarised environment over that issue, in order to avoid potentially lengthy and irresolvable discussions on the matter at that time. The system was then approved by the Commission after its first application in 2002. The SC Handbook states that:

> Member nations have the right to nominate national delegations to the Scientific Committee; there is no limit to the size of any delegation. Each country represented on the Scientific Committee nominates a Head of Delegation who has one vote, should voting be required. However, the Scientific Committee has wisely chosen not to use voting to 'decide' scientific matters (see section 5) and voting is not used apart from occasionally with respect to choosing a Chair and/or Vice-Chair (see section 3.2).

Otherwise, the Committee has always tried to treat all participants as equal in the work of the SC, i.e. they can be Convenors, intersessional group chairs, etc. There are no indications in the RoP or report discussions to suggest that Heads of Delegation have or should have some 'political' role within the SC. Throughout the years, this has been part of the philosophy of the SC – that as a body it should strive to provide the best *scientific* advice possible to the Commission – quite correctly, the political and management implications of that advice are to be determined by the Commission after consideration of any other relevant factors (socio-political, financial, etc.) that it so wishes. While it is clear that certain topics inevitably have a political element to them, the SC as a body has tried extremely hard to minimise this wherever possible.

It must be said that there is a potential risk in giving the Heads of Delegation a more formal 'interpretational' role within the Committee (e.g. in terms of relative priorities) with the associated possibility of voting on more issues than just election of officers has the possibility *in the future* to increase political influence within the SC (that may also influence who member nations choose to head their delegations). While of course, giving such a role to Heads of Delegations could be a Commission decision, it would be against the philosophy of the SC to date and it is difficult to see that this would improve the quality of *scientific* advice or the inclusivity of the present arrangements within the SC; in addition many member countries do not send scientists to the SC. The present good reputation of the SC within and outside the Commission is extremely important and based on its broadly perceived objectivity and scientific independence - while improvements are always possible and procedures should continuously be reviewed (and they are - there is a standing item upon the agenda) to ensure full participation by all participants, care must be taken to preserve the maximum level of scientific objectivity, within the broad-scale guidance of the appropriate political body, the Commission.

The roles of the Chair (and Vice-Chair) – who are always formally members of a delegation but who put the Committee above national interest (e.g. not acting simultaneously as Head of Delegation in the SC and not sitting as part of their national delegations in the Commission meeting but having a separate 'Scientific Committee' seat) – are primarily administrative and involve a large amount of 'voluntary' work.

As the Handbook states:

> '1. Annual Meeting related
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> (a) to develop the draft agenda for the annual Scientific Committee meeting and circulate it 60 days in advance;

(b) to integrate any comments received on the draft and circulate a revised draft agenda 21 days in advance for discussion and adoption at the opening plenary;

(c) to develop a timetable and *modus operandii* for the annual meeting for discussion and adoption at the opening plenary;

(d) to appoint Convenors for sub-committees, standing working groups etc;

(e) to approve invited participants, observers and local scientists (see 3.1.1);

(f) to Chair annual meetings;

(g) to present the work of the Scientific Committee to the Commission.

2. To determine the participation of the expert group to review special permits;

3. To participate in the Data Availability Group.'

To date, the SC and the Commission have recognised this and have not tried to micromanage the way the Chair achieves these major tasks – the organisation of this work has been the responsibility of the Chair in consultation with Convenors of his/her choosing, the Secretariat, and anyone else he/she sees fit including Heads of Delegations. In particular, the Chair must organise the SC work according to the Commission agenda and instructions, he/she has the duty to present at every Commission meeting the report, workplan and budget for the next SC that is based upon work undertaken by the SC and that has been fully discussed at the SC level. It is the Chair's responsibility to listen to the debate and instructions within the Commission and to modify the workplan in accord with any instructions it receives.

With respect to the choice/representation of Convenors and the issue of terms, this has been discussed within the Committee recently (e.g. JCRM 14 (suppl.), p.79-80) and the Committee agreed that the present Handbook wording was appropriate: *it is the Chair's responsibility to appoint Convenors for each of the sub-groups; this requires a balance of a number of features including experience, geographical spread, a balance of the need for new blood with the need for continuity (more important in some groups than others).*

Past Chairs have noted the difficulty in getting participants to agree to be Convenors and the present system of seeking co-convenors was initiated for that purpose. It could be valuable for the Chair and existing Convenors and Co-convenors to discuss within sub-groups about possible candidates and to actively encourage participants to let the Chair know if they would be interested in being a Convenor, co-convenor or rapporteur. Recognising that it is not desirable to change all convenors at the same time, this would allow the Chair sufficient choice over the next few years to work towards cycles within the convenor groups such that terms of individual convenors would normally be in the range of 3-5 years.

More detail on the current role of Convenors is given in the Handbook:

'4.1.1 THE ROLE OF CONVENORS

The Convenor's responsibilities can be summarised as follows:

1. to facilitate intersessional progress on identified tasks including providing advice to the Chair as appropriate;

2. to identify potential invited participants;

3. to draw up the draft agenda for the sub-group's work for discussion and agreement at an organisational meeting of the sub-group;

4. if elected chair (as is normally the case) by the sub-group at its opening meeting:

    a. to meet in the Convenors' group to determine the business and timetable for the day

    b. to provide advice to the Chair on other meeting-related matters should they arise;

    c. to chair the sub-groups meetings efficiently and fairly and if necessary establish small expert groups;

    d. to authorise working papers should they be deemed necessary (see below);

    e. to appoint rapporteurs and ensure the sub-group's report follows the guidelines for reports, to present the sub-group report to the full Plenary and to provide an initial draft for the relevant sections of the Plenary report;

    f. 'To develop with other members of the Convenors' Group a prioritised list for funding that should to be made available to the full Committee at least by 6pm on the penultimate day of the Scientific Committee Annual Meeting.

    g. to ensure that the final version of the sub-group report is completed by the end of the day after the Scientific Committee meeting;

    h. to meet in the Convenors' group the day after the Scientific Committee meeting to finalise the draft workplan for the coming year to be submitted to the Commission.

4.1.2 ELIGIBILITY OF CONVENORS AND CO-CONVENORS

'All Committee members are eligible to become Convenors or co-convenors. A co-convenor may be appointed to assist the Convenor of a sub-group, gain experience in chairing and learn Committee procedures. Requirements include appropriate scientific background and/or chairing experience, knowledge of Committee procedures and appropriate communication skills.