Global Science Forum

PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE MANDATE OF THE OECD GLOBAL SCIENCE FORUM

This document contains the proposed mandate of the OECD Global Science Forum, with updates and revisions as requested by Global Science Forum Delegates, and as approved by the Global Science Forum Bureau. The revised mandate, which is to remain in force until January 31, 2014, is submitted for approval at the 93rd session of the Committee for Scientific and Technological Policy.

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MANDATE OF THE OECD GLOBAL SCIENCE FORUM

The OECD Global Science Forum shall be a venue for consultations among senior science policy officials of the OECD Member countries, leading to findings and recommendations for action on high-priority science policy issues that require international consultations and/or co-operation, and, whenever possible, identifying opportunities for collaboration on major scientific undertakings. The OECD Global Science Forum shall build on its accomplishments and procedures since 1999, and on those of the Megascience Forum from 1992 to 1998, with more flexible working mechanisms, and a broader scope including that includes issues at the intersection of science and other public policy domains. As in the Megascience Forum, substantive work will be performed by representatives of governments and invited experts, with the OECD Secretariat playing a facilitating and co-ordinating role.

Through its deliberations and activities, the OECD Global Science Forum shall assist Members in the formulation and implementation of their science policies by:

- Exploring opportunities for new or enhanced international co-operation in selected scientific areas.
- Defining international frameworks for vital national or regional science policy decisions.
- Addressing the scientific dimensions of issues of global concern.

The Forum’s principal customers will be the government science policy officials who will bring issues forward for consultation. The Forum shall regularly report to the Committee on the progress of its work, its findings, and new topics and activities that are being considered for incorporation into its work programme. At the request of the Committee, it may undertake work on specific issues, for example, reviews and analyses of current policies, practices and emerging challenges. It shall maintain close working relationships with relevant bodies of the OECD and other international organisations. The OECD Global Science Forum shall define its operating procedures as needed, taking into account the experience and relevant discussions of the Megascience Forum. To ensure that the Forum’s work attracts the broad support of delegations, and complements that of the Committee, the following criteria should be met before any new activity is undertaken:

- **Specificity** -- A specific challenge, problem, opportunity or programme area must be identified -- one that concerns international scientific co-operation, and requires a structured international consultation with the involvement of governmental officials.
- **Relevance** -- There must exist significant near- or mid-term decisions and actions by governments that would be facilitated by the activity.
- **Workload** -- A fixed time interval, as well as the type of activity should be specified (workshop, working group, study, structured discussion by the Forum, etc.). The resources required from the OECD Secretariat and the Member delegations should be described.
- **Commitment** -- There must be a high level of interest among Member countries, including broad geographic representation among the OECD membership. One or more lead countries must be willing to provide the needed leadership and resources. There must be a prospect for participation by the appropriate governmental representatives, and scientific experts.
• **Inclusiveness** -- Potential involvement of non-OECD countries, international bodies, and other OECD committees must be considered to maximise opportunities for productive interactions, and to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

The Mandate of the OECD Global Science Forum shall remain in force until **31 January 2014** 30 April 2004, subject to the renewal of the mandate of the Committee by the Council, unless the Committee decides otherwise. An evaluation exercise will be conducted prior to the end of the mandate period. Approximately half-way into that period, the extent and format of the evaluation will be decided by the Global Science Forum, with the concurrence of the CSTP.
Explanatory note

to the Mandate of the OECD Global Science Forum

I. Scope of Global Science Forum Activities

The OECD Global Science Forum is a venue for consultations among senior science policy officials of the OECD Member countries, leading to findings and recommendations for action on high-priority science policy issues that require international consultations and/or co-operation, and whenever possible, for identifying opportunities for international scientific co-operation.

The OECD Global Science Forum builds on its accomplishments and best practices since 1999, and on those of the Megascience Forum from 1992 to 1998, with more flexible working mechanisms, and a broader scope that includes issues at the intersection of science and other public policy domains. The Forum’s principal customers are the government science policy officials who bring issues to the Forum for analysis, deliberation and resolution in an intergovernmental setting. Specifically, the Forum serves its Members in the following ways:

i) Exploring opportunities for new or enhanced international co-operation in selected scientific areas. The Global Science Forum contributes to the identification and exploitation of opportunities for strengthening the global research infrastructure (e.g., facilities, instruments, databases, research networks and programmes) in response to new developments in science and technology, and to changing societal needs. Activities of this kind are expected to lead to better international co-ordination, sharing and rationalisation of existing or new resources.

ii) Defining international frameworks for vital national or regional science policy decisions. Governments can strengthen their own decision-making processes by using the Forum to become informed about the priorities, plans and funding decisions of other countries, prior to making their own national or regional plans. Such information can be useful for identifying, at an early stage, attractive opportunities and partnerships for international co-operation. Forum activities promote a dialogue between scientists and policymakers, to supplement the consultations that take place on a national or regional basis.

iii) Addressing the scientific dimensions of issues of global concern. Scientific research can provide essential information and advice to decision-makers on a wide range of critical global-scale issues. International consultations are needed for strengthening this type of research, and for promoting the use of scientific information in the development of the best policy options.

II. Criteria for Undertaking an Activity of the Forum

Subsidiary activities of the Global Science Forum are proposed by Member delegations, and participants are appointed by governments. Because only a small number of activities can be carried out at any time, the following stringent criteria must be applied.

Specificity: The issue(s) must be of particular timeliness and importance; however, the intrinsic importance of an issue is not itself sufficient to warrant an activity by the Forum. A specific challenge, opportunity, or programme area must be identified - one that requires a structured international consultation involving governmental officials.

Relevance: The outcome must be directly relevant to near- or mid-term decisions and actions that can be taken by government officials or scientific administrators, and there must be a prospect for addressing the issue successfully in a reasonable period of time.
Workload: Proposals for new activities should be carefully prepared, with due consideration to the Mandate of the Forum and the required workload, including the burden imposed on the member delegations and on OECD resources. A fixed time interval, as well as the type of activity (workshop, working group, study, structured discussion by the Forum etc.) should be specified.

Commitment: The Forum will not sponsor any activity unless there is a substantial consensus among Members (with one or more of the Member countries being willing to provide the needed leadership and resources), and strong commitments from a significant number of delegations, including broad geographic representation among the OECD membership. The level of participation, including the responsibility and authority of designated governmental representatives, and the degree of support from scientific experts, must be appropriate for the issue under consideration.

Inclusiveness: Potential involvement of non-OECD countries, international bodies, and other OECD committees must be considered to maximise opportunities for productive interactions, and to avoid unnecessary duplication. The Forum will not duplicate or interfere with the work of any other international organisation or process, nor will consider matters that can be dealt with on a bilateral or trilateral basis. In general, purely scientific matters will not be debated by the Forum or its subsidiary bodies. If unresolved scientific questions emerge during the course of a Forum activity, an appropriate recommendation for action can be made to a scientific body. If opportunities for co-operation are identified, interested governments will decide whether they wish to participate in discussions leading to the negotiation and implementation of international projects. The responsibility for negotiating final agreement and administering the co-operation will reside with the participating governments. The Forum itself will not play an operational role in managing any scientific project or facility.

III. Mechanisms for Addressing Selected Topics

The Global Science Forum will hold two general meetings each year and will authorise specialised subsidiary activities as needed. The Forum will produce findings and recommendations for action at senior administrative or operational levels. Recommendations to Science and Technology Ministers may also be made. Mechanisms will be optimised for each topic under consideration, to produce policy-relevant findings, options, and recommendations for actions by governments:

- Working groups can be established, based on the Megascience Forum model. Such working groups, which have a well-defined scope and duration, bring together senior programme officials to exchange information about national priorities and plans, and to explore opportunities for co-operation and co-ordination on new or existing scientific programmes and projects.

- Single-event workshops can be organised to bring together government officials and scientific experts with the goal of exploring a selected issue in detail, and of formulating conclusions and recommendations for actions by governments and other relevant parties. Conducting a workshop may be appropriate before a working group activity is authorised.

- Surveys and studies can be conducted to gather and analyse information, if there is strong interest by a significant number of Forum delegations. Typically, these activities will serve to inform debate by the Forum itself. The responsibility for initiating and carrying out such work will normally rest with the governments that request it; the secretariat will provide analytical support upon request.
IV. Forum Operations

Duration

The mandate of the Global Science Forum shall remain in force until 31 January 2014, subject to the renewal of the mandate of the Committee for Scientific and Technological Policy (CSTP) by the Council, unless the Committee decides otherwise.

Funding

The funding of the Global Science Forum will be based on Part II voluntary contributions. If the Global Science Forum needs to take up new activities upon request of the CSTP, additional resources will be sought from Part I funding.

Membership

It is expected that Global Science Forum delegations will be led by senior science policy officials with responsibility for establishing and implementing national or regional science policies. Programme managers, scientists and other experts can be included in the makeup of each delegation at the discretion of Member governments. Forum delegates should maintain close links with participants in the subsidiary activities. Non-OECD countries with CSTP observer status may participate with the same status in the work of the Forum.

The government-designated participants in the Forum’s subsidiary activities will have detailed programmatic knowledge of their areas of responsibility (priorities, objectives, scope, funding, schedule, etc.), and the ability to direct or influence their national activities to take advantage of international opportunities. The subsidiary activities will primarily be a venue for productive discussions between policy-makers, supported by scientists whenever appropriate.

Activities

Deliberations of the Global Science Forum will be substantive, rather than being limited to authorising and reviewing subsidiary activities. In general, this substantive work will be done by the delegates, or persons designated by governments. The OECD secretariat will concentrate on facilitating the process, providing guidance and advice, solving problems, identifying best practices, developing links among the Forum’s activities, adding value to documents and publications, and maintaining contacts with other OECD activities, with external organisations, and with the press and the public. When directed by the Forum, members of the secretariat may carry out analytical work to support selected activities.

Forum delegates will propose activities to the Forum for consideration at its regular meetings. At the request of the CSTP, the Global Science Forum may undertake work on specific issues, for example, reviews and analyses of current policies, practices and emerging challenges. Whenever a new activity is under serious consideration, the secretariat will identify all relevant activities within the OECD with a view to possible joint work. In most situations, preparatory work will be jointly performed by a limited group of interested Delegations, and reviewed by the Forum prior to undertaking any long-term activity, to ensure that the essential elements of a successful strategy and workplan are in place. If the Forum determines that a need exists, and if there is sufficient interest, the establishment of an activity will be authorised and included in the Forum’s work programme. If a longer-term structured activity is authorised (for example, a limited-term working group based on the Megascience Forum model), the government-designated participants should begin their work by defining its scope, work schedule, and internal structure (e.g., subgroups, if needed). Participation in an activity will not represent a commitment by any government to a specific project, collaboration or expenditure.
For most subsidiary activities, the Forum will designate one or more lead countries, not necessarily the country that first proposed the activity. The governments of the lead countries will, if appropriate, designate a Chairperson as well as staff who will work with the secretariat to ensure the efficient implementation of the activity. The lead countries will have responsibility for the efficient and productive conduct of the activity, and it should be prepared to devote the required resources to fulfilling this responsibility, including, in most cases, adequate commitments of staff time for substantive and administrative functions.

**Reporting**

Delegates who participate in Forum activities will report directly to their governments.

At its regular meetings, the Forum will receive reports regarding ongoing subsidiary activities, and will offer guidance, directions and critiques to those activities. At the conclusion of each subsidiary activity, a final report will be submitted to the Forum.

The Forum will report on its work programme and activities to the CSTP.

**Participation by non-OECD countries**

Non-OECD countries that do not have observer status should, whenever appropriate, be invited to fully participate in all of the Forum’s subsidiary activities, based on the consensus of participating Member delegations. The Forum will consider measures for facilitating the arrangements required for inviting non-OECD countries.

**Evaluation**

An evaluation exercise will be conducted prior to the end of the authorised mandate period. Approximately halfway into that period, the extent and format of the evaluation will be decided by the Global Science Forum, with the concurrence of the CSTP.