



Report on the meeting of the IANAS Steering Committee

**Friday, Nov. 5th, 2004
Royal Society of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada**

Present

Howard Alper (Royal Society of Canada); Hernan Chaimovich (Brazilian Academy of Sciences); Juan Asenjo (Chilean Academy of Sciences); Claudio Bifano (Academy of Physical, Mathematical and Natural Sciences of Venezuela); Michael Clegg (National Academy of Sciences); Octavio Paredes (Mexican Academy of Sciences); Josée Lalande (IANAS - Canadian Secretariat); Marcos Cortesão Barnsley Scheuenstuhl (IANAS - Brazilian Secretariat).

Unable to Attend

Harold Ramkissoon (The Caribbean Scientific Union).

The meeting was convened at 9:45 a.m.

1. REPORT FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

Howard Alper opened the session thanking all those present for attending the meeting. He expressed his satisfaction at the progress the group has made since the organization got off the ground last May. He mentioned the important financial support received from the International Development Research Center (IDRC) and the InterAcademy Panel (IAP), pointing to the need of identifying new initiatives and programmes to be developed by IANAS in the near future. As concluding remarks, he conveyed the excellent working relationship with Hernan Chaimovich and recognized the significant support provided to the co-chairs by IANAS' secretariat.

Hernan Chaimovich thanked the Royal Society of Canada for generously hosting the first meeting of the IANAS Steering Committee. He also expressed his satisfaction for sharing with Howard Alper the position of co-chair, with whom work has been smooth and easy. He stressed that although organizations such as IANAS usually take a long time to mature and become recognized, IANAS has achieved significant steps, being currently recognized by several governments and intergovernmental agencies. In Brazil, IANAS has been officially recognized by the Minister of Science and Technology. Support for IANAS, ca. US\$ 25,000 has already been granted within the framework of a grant to the Brazilian Academy of Sciences. In closing, he emphasized that in order to make the efforts worthwhile, the network

needs to be action-based. In this sense, IANAS shall now make strategic decisions with regards to the establishment of new programmes and initiatives.

2. COMMUNICATIONS (BULLETIN, WEB SITE, ETC.)

In review, the Secretariat did an excellent job on the first bulletin. The content is well-presented and respects the order of presenting information on IANAS news first, followed by news on the member academies. Feedback from the members included the need to have a contact address on the bulletin (physical and email), page numbering, and a clearly defined distribution policy. The IAP Academies should receive a copy of the bulletin, as well as OAS, TWAS, ICSU, IDB, UNESCO and key ministers and deputy ministers in the Americas. IANAS member Academies will receive the electronic version and five hard copies of the bulletin. Additional copies will be sent upon request.

With regards to the website, M. Cortesão presented the prototype of the website, that will be going 'live' on the Internet on the coming weeks. All members were pleased with the presentation. It was noted that the website cannot become a database, and M. Clegg suggested that reports from individual academies be posted on the site. H. Alper supported this idea, giving as an example the fact that the RSC report on genetically-modified foods had a large impact on Agriculture and Health in Canada. The IANAS website has a potential to become an important information channel.

3. SCIENCE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

J. Asenjo noted the success of the program and reported its recent activities: the Workshop on Strategic Planning for the Initiation of Inquiry-Based Science Education Projects (October 25-29) and the Meeting of IANAS Academy Focal Point Persons (October 29-30), both held in Santiago. C. Bifano, having participated in these two meetings, expressed his pleasure with the results. He stressed that during the meeting the national teams discussed a strategic plan for the project, what was a very positive experience in defining for the participants what has to be done in each country. He also announced that the Venezuelan government will be providing financial support for the programme. Bifano emphasized that IANAS Academies should write to the Ministers of Education of their countries to ask for support of the initiative and to propose the implementation of national pilot experiences.

H. Chaimovich reported that in August, on behalf of the Science Education Programme, J. Allende addressed the Ministers of Education at an OAS meeting. Now, at the upcoming Nov 11 meeting in Lima, Peru, the project will be officially presented to the Ministers of Science and Technology to request their support (in the hopes of obtaining \$500.000 over three years).

H. Alper informed that the Canadian representative at the Santiago meeting had a very positive impression of the discussion held and that the next meeting of the Science Education programme will take place in Canada. Currently a funding proposal is being drafted, to be presented to IDB.

In a side discussion, members presented the ways in which education is managed in their own countries: in Canada, provincial governments have the power over education; in the United States, education is controlled at the local level; in Brazil, primary education is led at a local level, while secondary schooling is the responsibility of the state, and public post-secondary

education is managed by the federal government. IANAS must understand these differences to identify how to better implement the programme in each specific situation, there being major challenges to the program: (1) the implementation of national pilot experiences, and (2) addressing decision makers, trying to make them sensitive to the importance of the programme. In the longer term, a major challenge to be faced is the transformation of the pilot experiences into wider, or national, programmes.

In Chile, J. Allende and J. Asenjo have close ties to the Minister of Education, who is very supportive of this Science Education programme, noting that Chile's focus is to extend the pilot program. It was agreed that the group should increase IANAS awareness as much as possible, notably to Ministers of Science and Education. It is important to sell the IANAS symbol.

In the opinion of all, Jorge Allende (Chilean Academy of Sciences), who is leading the Science Education Program, is doing an outstanding job.

It was decided that, based on J. Allende's report on the Lima meeting, IANAS should develop a document, to be distributed to the member Academies, calling for the implementation of the recommendations stated in the report. An international document may help Academies reach the higher levels (policy-makers). In that respect, IANAS could be effective at championing individual Academy statements at major events, such as symposia, conferences, general meetings, etc.

With regards to the Lima meeting, it was agreed that three press releases should be prepared: one presenting IANAS; one focussing on the Science Education Programme and its potential contribution to the Americas; and one on the Water Programme and the relevance of this issue to society.

Finally, upon reviewing the list of institutions and presentations that will be made at the meeting in Lima, members stressed the importance of promoting IANAS wherever possible and networking with key organizations (WFEO in particular).

4. WATER PROGRAMME

H. Chaimovich presented a historic perspective of the IANAS Water Programme, identifying the two different approaches proposed by the co-chairs of the programme. These represent different but complementary views that are present in the international scientific community. The IANAS programme must integrate both the hydrogeological and the ecological perspectives, identifying a niche and building-up strong and vigorous actions.

The Steering Committee of IANAS understands that it is essential that a meeting occur as soon as possible between the Co-Chairs and the Steering Committee of the programme, no later than April 2005. H. Alper urged that the group move faster with the water programme.

The IANAS Steering Committee indicates that capacity building might represent a unifying theme for the programme, since both co-chairs understand that capacity building constitutes a key component. The aggregation of both views might represent an added value to the IANAS programme, bringing to the international scenario a differentiated and innovative approach to the problem.

Considering the strong correlation between the IANAS Water Programme and the IAP Water Programme; these must try to work together, respecting regional aspects that must be stressed.

5. SECRETARIAT

There was a general discussion on how the IANAS will operate. H. Chaimovich announced that the Brazilian Academy will be increasing their hardware to take on higher traffic on their server due to the IANAS website. Brazil will be primarily responsible for its upkeep.

All members strongly agreed on the notion of incorporating IANAS. It would prove useful in the way of financing considerations, both in Canada in Brazil. It was decided that IANAS should be incorporated both in Brazil and Canada, where local secretariats are currently operating.

6. FUNDING

The real challenge facing IANAS is not to secure funds for operating costs but to fund the programmes at a healthy level.

It was announced that the Brazilian government has accepted to provide US\$25.000/year to the Brazilian Academy of Sciences, for three years, to support the Brazilian Secretariat of IANAS. In Canada, IDRC and the University of Ottawa are both providing C\$30.000/year each, for three years, to the Canadian Secretariat. Additionally IAP will also be granting US\$30.000,00/year to IANAS, under the IAP Capacity Building Programme.

It was noted by H. Alper that the network should not rule out private companies to provide funds. There could be opportunities in various industries, such as pharmaceutical (Merck Frosst spends significant funds each year on science education in Canada).

Under H. Chaimovich's request, it was agreed that the Brazilian Secretariat will approach the Inter-American Development Bank to request an amount of funding of no less than \$300.000 to support a study on examples of success in the areas of S,T&I in the Americas. This study is intended to demonstrate, with numbers and evidence, how S,T&I has contributed to development and generation of income in the hemisphere.

Discussion also ensued regarding contributions from member Academies. It was agreed that IANAS Academies would be invited to make a voluntary contributions to the network.

7. AGENDA FOR 2006 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Venezuela will host the (May) 2006 General Assembly, in either Margarita Island or Caracas. The meeting might be held in the headquarters of the Academy of Physical, Mathematical and Natural Sciences of Venezuela, if Caracas hosts the meeting.

C. Bifano stated that meals and accommodations can be supplied for the Academies. He went on to explain that currently, significant issues of the day in Venezuela are science education

and science communication. The level of science teaching is not as high as it used to be, and this is a problem. At the undergraduate level, universities are becoming more of a research institute. Teachers are being evaluated more on their research than their teaching capabilities, resulting in lower quality education overall.

During the General Assembly, IANAS will issue official statements. Two natural topics for statements are Science Education and Water. Another suggested topic was Globalization of Knowledge. These topics will be discussed at the next meeting of the Steering Committee.

It was agreed that by the next meeting of the Executive Board, C. Bifano would provide a one-page summary plan for the Assembly.

8. NEW IANAS PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

The Steering Committee discussed various topics, such as the relation between science and economy or human resource issues in science and technology. Three main topics emerged as potential programmes:

- Management of marine resources
- Identification of barriers to regional cooperation
- Methodology and protocol in priority setting for Science and Technology
- Science communication.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the IANAS Steering Committee will take place in Tobago on May 12 and 13, 2005.

The meeting was successfully concluded at 6:00 p.m. and thus the original plan to have the meeting continue on Nov. 6 was abandoned.