



International Council for
The Life Sciences

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PREAMBLE

Extraordinary advances in the life sciences and their application have brought enormous benefits to public health, medicine, agriculture, and industrial processes. It is essential that the full humanitarian and economic benefits from these advances continue to be realized.

To do so, it is vital to develop a global mechanism that can serve as an authoritative source of objective consideration and analysis of the benefits of these advances and related risks. It is especially important that any such risks be first identified, understood, and effectively addressed. Any effort to do so must be international in nature and be led by the life sciences community, including private industry, academia, and other non-governmental institutions.

The speed of current life sciences developments often surpasses national and international governmental efforts to put in place legal and regulatory policy. Often the lack of international uniformity in the evaluation of these risks impedes the development of beneficial scientific advances. As the life sciences community is at the leading edge of these developments and their dissemination worldwide, it is well-placed to assist governments and the public by contributing directly to the international effort to deal effectively with the global identification and management of biological risks to public health, safety and security.

To promote this necessary culture of responsibility within the life sciences community, its leaders from around the world have agreed to create an international entity called the International Council for the Life Sciences (ICLS).

THE CHARTER

An International Council for the Life Sciences (“the Council”) is hereby established that will:

- Create a self-sustaining global organisation for the life sciences community to contribute to improved quality of life and enhanced public safety and security;
- Promote engagement of the life sciences community worldwide on issues of public safety and security;
- Facilitate effective partnerships between the various elements of the life sciences community, including private industry, academia, and government; and
- Serve as an authoritative source of objective consideration and analysis of global biological risks in relation to advances in the life sciences and their application.

Mission

The mission of the Council is to help ensure global public health, safety, and security by safeguarding the opportunities offered by advances in the life sciences and their application through the promotion of best practices, standards, and codes of conduct.

What the Council will do:

To accomplish this mission the Council will facilitate essential and timely contributions to national and international policy development through a cooperative effort to reduce biological risks through their identification and management by:

- Proactively engaging industry, academia, governments, and the public to enable accurate communication and understanding of the benefits and biological risks arising from advances in the life sciences;
- Operating as an independent organisation designed to cooperate closely with national governments, international inter-governmental organisations, academia, private companies and non-governmental organisations; and
- Promoting the widest possible membership among the life sciences community.

Membership

Membership of the Council is open to private entities and academic institutions participating in the life sciences that will fulfill their obligations in accordance with the mission of the Council. Members should develop the means of implementing the Charter within their own organisation in accordance with local laws and regulations. The details relating to Membership can be found in Annex A.

CHARTER COMMITMENTS

To promote the mission of the Council, members undertake to:

International and National Laws and Regulations

Observe, promote and cooperate to help develop effective national and international laws, regulations, and policies in relation to the life sciences in support of the mission of the Council.

Personnel

Exercise the highest standards in the recruitment, training, and management of personnel during and after employment, with special attention to those individuals with access to information, materials, and technology that could have significant adverse effects on public health, safety, and security if misused or not employed safely and appropriately. Members of the Council will be expected to have a code of conduct for their staff to promote the objectives of the Charter.

Information

Ensure the security of information by observing relevant international and national laws and regulations in handling information, which could have a significant negative impact on public health, safety, and security; and also to contribute to developing, in cooperation with governments, effective and responsible procedures for the release of such information into the public domain.

Safe and Secure Operation of Facilities

Observe the highest possible standards for the safe and secure operation of all facilities, including materials in transit, in the interest of public health and environmental safety; and to contribute to the development of more effective international and national laws, regulations, guidelines, policies, and standards in this regard.

Governance of Research and Development Activities

Take full account of public health, safety, and security considerations when planning and conducting research and development activities and to support and contribute to effective and responsible international and national entities engaged in developing and promoting codes of conduct in this regard.

Risk Evaluation and Mitigation

Facilitate the development of measures to evaluate and mitigate the risks arising from the misuse of the life sciences and cooperate to support an international response in cases of major natural biological outbreaks.

ESTABLISHMENT

The ICLS Convening Conference (CC) will establish the organisation, approve the Charter of the Council, appoint an Executive Committee, and appoint the first president of the Council whose term should last for at least two Annual General Meetings (AGMs). Organisations intending to join the Council can send one representative with voting rights to the CC.

The organisation will be established as a non-profit organisation, financed by private foundations, other sources of private nongovernmental support, and membership subscriptions.

GOVERNANCE

Annual General Meetings are open to all members. AGMs will oversee the activities of the Council, approve programs of work, and provide a forum for debate on issues of critical concern

to the life sciences community in relation to public health, safety and security. Members will be entitled to send one representative with voting rights to the AGMs. The AGMs will approve any subsequent amendments to the charter.

They will approve subsequent appointments of Presidents, which will be made for terms of not less than two years. The AGMs will also approve appointments to the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee will be composed of no more than twenty members to manage the Council's affairs and will be chaired by the President of the ICLS. The Executive Committee will be composed of individuals that reflect as broad a range of members' interests as possible. Executive Committee members, who will be internationally recognized as leaders in their fields and aware of crucial policy, public health, safety and security implications of the life sciences, will embody the range of relevant expertise that reflects:

- A full awareness of current and future developments in the relevant sciences and technologies.
- An understanding of all sectors of the private life sciences industry.
- An appreciation of the public policy implications of developments in the life sciences.
- An ability to gauge accurately the possible risks in developments in the life sciences and their application in the context of challenges from naturally occurring disease or possible use for malevolent purposes, such as biological weapons.
- A familiarity with national and international legal requirements, regulations and standards relevant to the life sciences.

Members of the Executive Committee should serve for at least three years and for no more than two terms consecutively, unless the AGM agrees otherwise. The Executive Committee will review new membership applications quarterly.

The Council and the Executive Committee will be served by a small Secretariat. The Secretariat will be headed by an Executive Director appointed by the Executive Committee. The Secretariat will be composed of staff with properly recognised expertise in the life sciences, public policy and private industry. The number of staff and specific responsibilities will be determined by the Executive Committee and be subject to approval by the Council as a whole.

MECHANISMS

In addition to the AGMs, other mechanisms will be set up on the advice of the Executive Committee to consider issues pertinent to safeguarding the future of the life sciences as determined by members at the AGMs, such as multi-stakeholder working groups, forums, projects, information exchange, and educational and outreach activities.

Annex A

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE LIFE SCIENCES

Membership Annex

Qualification

Membership of the Council is open to private entities and academic institutions participating in the life sciences that will fulfill their obligations in accordance with the mission of the International Council for the Life Sciences (ICLS).

Associate membership status is available to government departments and agencies and international inter-governmental organisations. Associates will be non-voting members who are eligible to participate in Annual General Meetings (AGMs) and other activities of the Council.

Application

Interested entities should complete the ICLS application form and return with payment to the ICLS Membership Secretary. The Executive Committee will review membership applications quarterly. Applicants will be notified if the submitted application was approved or not approved.

Founding membership applications presented in 2005 will be confirmed by the Executive Committee.

Representation and voting rights

All Members shall have one vote at the Annual General Meetings. Members shall appoint a person as the voting representative to attend AGMs and a point of contact for coordination purposes. Members may send a delegation of any size to attend the AGMs. Members shall also designate other individuals, based on their appropriate expertise, to participate in additional Council activities.

Associate members shall appoint a representative to attend AGMs. Associate members may send a delegation of any size to the AGM, with the prior approval of the Executive Committee, or its designee (e.g., the Secretariat). Associate members shall also designate other individuals, based on their appropriate expertise, to participate in additional Council activities.

Implementation

Members of the ICLS are required to deposit with the Council a copy of the Charter implementation document specific to their organisation. The document will not be shared with other ICLS members unless permission is granted from the originator.

Withdrawal of Membership

A Member or Associate member shall cease to be a member of the Council upon receipt by the Executive Committee of a written resignation from that Member.

Members and Associate members may be expelled or suspended for a given period for conduct likely to be prejudicial to, or which could undermine the mission of the ICLS, or for any conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the ICLS or any of its members.