
Let's Stand Up for Global Science: The United States Must Not Cut Its Contribution to UNESCO Programs

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UNESCO's science programs rank among its greatest successes. In fact, a 1984 U.S. interagency panel studying the consequences of a U.S. withdrawal stated that the excellence of UNESCO's science activities alone would warrant continued membership in the Organization.

As the U.S. pullout on December 31, 1984 approached, scientists worldwide worried about the impact that a 25 percent reduction in the UNESCO budget—the U.S. contribution—would have on the international Organization's science programs, as well as on U.S. scientific interests around the world. Stepping forward with reassurances at the time was then Assistant Secretary of State Gregory J. Newell, who indicated that the U.S.'s \$47 million annual contribution to UNESCO, \$14 million of which went to science, would be rechanneled to support comparable multinational work.

The State Department did recommend such allocations for fiscal year 1986, but the Reagan Administration's budget contained nothing in the way of UNESCO substitute funds. It was only through the last-minute efforts of William Sal-

mon, then senior staff assistant at the State Department, that \$2.75 million was penciled into the budget—almost all of it earmarked for science programs.

However, Congress, under pressure to reduce the deficit, cut this to \$1.2 million, which entered a special account administered by the State Department called International Convention and Scientific Organization Contributions (ICSOC). Out of the ICSOC fund, the U.S. government made voluntary contributions to those UNESCO-sponsored science programs that a 1984 National Academy of Sciences (NAS) study identified as priorities, "essential to U.S. interests."

The largest contributions went to the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), the International Geological Correlation Program, the International Hydrological Program, and the Man and the Biosphere Program, which constitute the four major science efforts of UNESCO, and the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU). In addition, small grants went to the International Cell Research Organization, the International Brain Research Organization, the Natural Hazards Program, the

International Centre for Theoretical Physics, the International Social Science Council and others. Except in the case of the IOC (in which the United States was able to maintain its membership), the State Department passed the ICSOC funds through non-governmental agencies, such as NAS, ICSU, and the Consortium of Social Science Associations.

The \$1.2 million represented only partial restitution of the U.S.'s former contributions. A case in point is the IOC. Since leaving UNESCO, the United States has provided the IOC with only about one-half as much support as it previously did. Of course, those programs deemed non-priorities, including crucial programs in science education, have suffered at least a 25 percent reduction in their budgets since 1985.

It is too early to calculate the full cost of these cuts in scientific knowledge, limits on access to research areas around the world, and U.S. leadership in global science activities. Nevertheless, it has plainly been substantial.

For fiscal year 1987, Congress approved an increase in the ICSOC fund to \$2.0 million. This was encouraging and fully justified in view of the acute need. But now, in the proposed fiscal year 1988 budget, the allocation for ICSOC has been tentatively cut by \$800,000 to \$1.2 million. That amounts to a 40 percent reduction from the current figure. Congress will make its final decision on ICSOC funds for next year in the coming weeks.

It is vital that appropriations for

ICSOC not be cut in fiscal year 1988.

Not only will the reduction impede excellent science programs and U.S. participation in them, it will also send the wrong message abroad at an especially inopportune moment. There is now a great ferment of multinational science projects, such as the International Geosphere-Biosphere Program, the International Space Year, and other ICSU-sponsored activities. In light of these developments, what should our partners in science worldwide think of a 40 percent cut in the U.S. commitment to international cooperation in science?

Moreover, during this troubled period in U.S.-UNESCO relations, the ICSOC fund assures a U.S. presence at UNESCO and is virtually the only sign of U.S. commitment to the Organization's activities. What are UNESCO leaders and member countries to think of this reduction, especially as it is coming after real reforms in Paris? In the fall of 1985 the UNESCO General Conference met in Sofia and adopted over 200 reforms that will ensure clarity in the presentation of future budgets, greater oversight of administrative matters by member countries, and zero-growth in spending.

Furthermore, the controversial Amadou Mahtar M'Bow has announced he will not seek a third term as Director-General. I hope to see, as do many others, a scientist as the new DG. By placing a scientist at the helm, UNESCO could signal its intention to pursue serious work,

emphasizing those of its activities least disrupted in the past by politics. The changes at UNESCO are manifest.

With those reforms well underway at UNESCO, the United States should do more than play the waiting game as it has done since 1985. UNESCO delegates justifiably complain that they have never received from the State Department a list of those changes necessary to bring the United States back into the Organization. A public advisory group to the Secretary of State monitored developments in early 1986, but its activities seem now in abeyance. I know of no group in the U.S. government that is actively exploring the possibility of renewed membership or even the terms under which that might be possible.

This is the context in which Congress is planning to reduce the token amount now given to support outstanding UNESCO-sponsored science programs, and it is in this context that a cut should be and will be deplored by scientists worldwide and UNESCO member countries.

I therefore urge members of the international science community, and especially U.S. scientists, to contact Rep. David Obey (D-Wis.),

chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee for Foreign Operations, and Sen. Daniel K. Inouye (D-Hawaii), chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for Foreign Operations, and demand that appropriation for the ICSOC fund be, at minimum, \$2.0 million, the amount given in fiscal year 1987. Their addresses are:

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Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-3365

The Hon. Daniel K Inouye
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Washington, D.C. 20510
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I have described what a reduction would mean for science, for U.S. participation in global science programs, and for U.S.-UNESCO relations, such as they are. Now is the time for scientists to give practical expression to their support for international cooperation. Indeed, if concerned scientists do not resist lower funding, there may be no ICSOC funds at all in the coming years. ■