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Report of the SAC-XXII - SJC

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22nd Meeting of the IAI Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)
Sao Jose dos Campos, Brazil 26-28 July 2005

Participants:
SAC Members: Walter Fernandez (Chair), Vicente Barros, Michael Brklacich, Rene Capote, Alejandro Castellanos, Rana Fine, Silvia Garzoli, Luiz F. Legey.

Observers: Paul Filmer, National Science Foundation, USA; Arnoldo Matus Kramer, Instituto Nacional de Ecología, Mexico

IAI Directorate: Holm Tiessen (IAI Director elect), Gerhard Breulmann (Scientific Officer), Ione Anderson (Program Manager), Isabel Vega (Assistant to the Scientific Officer).

1. Opening by the SAC Chair

The SAC Chair, Walter Fernandez opened the meeting and welcomed the new SAC members, Telma Castro and Luis Mata.

2. Introduction of new SAC members (Telma Castro and Luis Mata) and Directorate staff, (Holm Tiessen, Director elect and Ione Anderson, Program Manager).

The SAC Chair welcomed the new IAI Directorate staff members, Holm Tiessen, Director elect and Ione Anderson, Program Manager.

3. Approval o the Minutes from the 21st SAC meeting, November 2004, Santiago, Chile

The Chair had a comment on point 5 regarding the IAI-NCAR joint activities, which he thought was not well represented in the minutes. Maria Silva, Walter Fernandez and Mike Brklacich had volunteered to be part of the committee. The Chair suggested deleting that paragraph. Alejandro Castellanos suggested to leave paragraph in and rephrase it by the end of this SAC meeting. The latter was agreed.

4. Remarks by the new IAI Director elect, Holm Tiessen

Holm Tiessen in his address, stressed that the success of IAI has so far been a result of its focus, such as its strategic science agenda; strategic plan for funding mechanisms; small grants that have helped the outreach components of major networks. He warned that despite this success, there has been a funding crisis in the past few years because of the low response from constituents and the need for that to change for IAI to survive. He highlighted the need for IAI to mend its ways to continue to achieve scientific excellence while making capacity-building a stronger component into the program.

He stressed the need to demonstrate to the IAI member countries the specific purpose of existence for the IAI with which they can identify themselves. He illustrated a few points to show how CRN proposals could be at the forefront of positive changes in IAI, i.e., how to bring together the science community to establish partnerships that leverage funds and provide leadership for research and education; promote public understanding and appreciation of science; enable people

who work at the forefront of discovery; encourage collaborative research across organizations, disciplines and international boundaries; foster connections between discoveries and their use in the service of society; increase opportunities for individuals and institutions to conduct high quality research.

Holm noted that some of the items in the Science Agenda are still not in the CRN proposals and remarked the need to find a clearly identifiable focus for something that IAI does well and that could make it become more relevant in the Americas. He further mentioned tasks for the SAC to develop strategies, such as: ensure the sustainability and institutionalization of networks; promote national agendas only as part of networks; promote linkages of the IAI and its networks to international GEC institutions; consider the new country concerns in the context of the Science agendas; guide a CRN2 dialogue under these strategic considerations; consider and develop strategies for non-funded proposals. He concluded that some of the proposals needed to be steered to include the IAI strategy and the need to accommodate strategic recommendations to improve dialogue. Silvia Garzoli and Rana Fine expressed some concern and the need that IAI should stay true to the commitment and call for proposal of CRN2.

Mike mentioned that part of IAI´s role is regional but warned that the vision to make it science and policy relevant is drifting. He added that there were no easy linkages between country priorities and the list of groupings of proposals and noted that IAI is defined by its projects and that the SAC can help to establish a strategic plan for projects.

Holm cited his own experience as a Principal Investigator with his CRN1 project. He said that while he got recognition, the institutionalization was not anchored well enough. Silvia agreed on the importance of the life after a CRN project is finished and mentioned the importance of outreach, and having other funding agencies interested in what IAI is doing by showing results.

5. IAI policy of Conflict of Interest

Gerhard Breulmann reminded SAC members to fill out the Conflict of Interest forms. Rene Capote declared a conflict with two proposals. Silvia said she did not read all the proposals to see if she had a conflict of interest, but if a conflict would be apparent she would leave the room. Rana stated she had a conflict with one proposal. Vicente Barros had a conflict of interest with three proposals. Luis Mata and Holm Tiessen had a conflict of interest with one proposal each.

6. Evaluation of full-proposals received under the Second Round of the IAI Collaborative Research Network (CRN II) program

Gerhard introduced the Matrix with final Panel ratings as well as Mail Review ratings. The Chair mentioned that the Panel´s overall rating sometimes differed from the mail reviews. Holm said that most of the proposals were fundable but at times the Panel had ranked them low to point out problems. Mike pointed out that work of the panel should not be repeated during the SAC meeting and there was some discussion on how to proceed exactly.

For the remainder of Day I the SAC discussed the proposals received under CRN II applying the criteria as outlined in the CRN General Guidelines. Proposals were placed into four categories, i.e, "fundable", "non-fundable", "seed money/partially fundable" or "to be discussed again".

The SAC meeting resumed on Wednesday morning, 27 July 2005 with a presentation by Dr. Jose Marques da Costa – Secretary General, United Nations Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for Latin American and the Caribbean.

The SAC continued the CRN discussions for the second day of the meeting. Holm pointed out that national interests should be promoted only under network interests since IAI is not a national institution, this was the idea when IAI asked countries to name their priorities, to initiate a dialogue among national representatives on international global change issues of importance to them. He mentioned that very often, capacity-building is brought through students and Marcella Ohira, Education and Outreach Officer was invited to offer her views on educational activities and CRNs. Marcella gave the Group an overview of IAI´s past capacity-building initiatives and agreed that developing educational activities under CRN2 would increase synergy among IAI activities. Alejandro suggested that since many of the CRNs are proposing workshops, IAI may integrate those into the IAI training institutes. Silvia pointed out that outreach and training is what IAI has to consider for life after CRN and mentioned as an example, programs that NOAA has directed at lower-level education, such as "teachers at sea and on the field".

The SAC continued with the discussion of the remaining proposals.

It was suggested to have the SAC discussion & recommendations for each proposal briefly summarized. This suggestion was approved. After careful consideration of all review criteria and additional criteria as regional and thematic distribution and the financial capacity of CRN 2, the SAC came up with a list of 10 proposals to be recommended for funding to the IAI EC. The IAI Director was given the mandate to move 10% of the budget in a strategic way to complement the program and to develop projects in the "seed" category.

Mike mentioned that, looking at the list of themes, the majority of the 10 proposals recommended for funding addressed theme 2, but added he could endorse the list as it was as long as IAI worked to remedy the almost absence of themes 3 and 4 and showed concern with the serious limitation of the portfolio of projects that was being put forward for approval. The human dimensions component of CRN II needs further strengthening. The thematic misbalance in the proposals should be addressed as much as possible through the proposals in the "Seed" category. It was furthermore suggested that student budgets need to be equitable and to consider workshops that are planned not be conducted in the same institution where the money is going. It was recognized that the networking component needed to be strengthened in some of the proposals.

7.   IAI-SCOPE RAP meeting, 28 November-2 December 2005, Ubatuba, SP, Brazil

Holm explained about the meeting and that it would address shortcomings in CRN1 in a book under the SCOPE series, which would specifically highlight approaches to bridge the natural and social sciences in the individual projects under CRN1, the policy relevance of the science conducted and the efforts to involve or communicate to stakeholders and policy makers. Holm explained that SCOPE meetings commonly synthesize available science on a specific theme, while this meeting would be the first of its kind, synthesizing CRN1 and the different approaches taken across the large array of topics. Telma suggested that where possible the PIs should identify solutions relevant to the region and suggested that concrete results be presented to policy makers. She added that this would be a good way to connect IAI with decision making in the countries.

Holm mentioned that the visibility of SCOPE could be used to highlight visibility of IAI and said he hoped to have access to the info from the SCOPE book long before it would come out, so that the information can be used during the implementation phase of CRN2.

Mike suggested that a committee get together to find an additional mechanism for a scientific synthesis of CRN1. Silvia suggested getting together with PIs to discuss this. She further

proposed to finish the meeting with this topic and asked for a volunteer to try to organize something to work on the synthesis. She mentioned the need for SAC to discuss what will be done next.

8.   Update of the EC/CoP meeting, Montreal, May 2005

The Chair presented a summary of the EC and CoP and went through the list of recommendations the EC made to the CoP (Annex II). He mentioned the offer of Venezuela to host the next CoP in May 2006 and said that if no other proposals are received, the next CoP will be held in Venezuela. Silvia asked the Chair to send a summary of the meeting to the SAC.

Telma, thanked the SAC and said she was happy to be part of the SAC and with the results of the meeting. Alejandro also thanked all.

The Chair thanked all participants and IAI staff, in particular, Isabel who is departing, with deep appreciation for her work over the years. Mike, also thanked Directorate staff. Silvia welcomed Ione Anderson, IAI´s new Program Manager.