

Meeting of the  
**Policy and Global Affairs Committee**  
**March 23-24, 2017**  
*Excerpt from Meeting Summary*

Members attending: Anne Petersen, chair; Ann Arvin, Roger Beachy, Richard Foster, TJ Glauthier, Neil Hawkins, Cora Marrett, Gilbert Omenn, Isaac Sanchez, Debra Stewart, and Robert Watson

Triennial Review of the Board on International Scientific Organizations (BISO)

The presentation of BISO's self-assessment was led by Michael Clegg (Chair) and Kathie Bailey (Director). The reviewers were PGA committee members Roger Beachy and Phil Hanlon, along with NAS member Cynthia Beall, who served as chair of BISO between 2004 and 2008.

The reviewers, after digesting the update materials from BISO and carrying out conference calls with the Chair and Director, developed questions to serve as the basis of assessing BISO's record and in setting its future strategies. The discussion at the PGA committee meeting was focused on those issues, which should serve as the basis for future reflection by the BISO Board in coming months:

1. Given the dominance of NSF funding for BISO, what role is played by the strategic context at NSF and the National Science Board in setting priorities that affect BISO? BISO could undertake a strategic review of the implications of possible withdrawals of the US from various international scientific organizations; for example, could one describe impacts on US research, the economy, and jobs?
2. Are there ways to insulate BISO from radical changes in sponsor support, such as multiple-year awards? In case of funding gaps, what contingency plans are being made? What could be the role of foundations or Academy fundraising to address such challenges?
3. How can BISO nimbly respond to and accommodate the changing structure of international science? In particular, can BISO as currently structured address interdisciplinary science and new emerging disciplines? Could synergies between the various national committees be a promising source of growth?
4. What has been the experience of BISO terminating participation in the biological unions in recent years, and what have been the specific consequences?
5. Can BISO use social media more to accomplish its mission? Have you found useful metrics to justify a higher level of engagement with social media?
6. Does BISO have a timetable for a new strategic plan, and can you discuss any major elements that may change from the last plan?
7. BISO and some of the USNCs have had impressive impact on some of the unions. How can BISO be an agent of change and reform in the governance/management of the scientific unions?

8. In association with the spirit of the new Administration, can BISO more clearly articulate the value of participation in the unions for the US economy and national security? Could/should policymakers be more involved in BISO's work?
9. How is BISO adjusting its management of the Visa Office to deal with the changes in US policy? Should BISO take the lead for the Academies in addressing new visa restrictions, and what form would such proactive approaches take?

The reviewers and committee overall gave high marks to the Board and staff for managing a broad portfolio with limited resources, and urged them to redouble their strategic planning and contingency plans for the inevitable challenges in the next few years. The committee asked for updates from BISO if major developments occur that could require significant changes in the Board operations.

*Follow-up Actions:* The BISO Board will be briefed at its next meeting (April 26-27) on the questions and recommendations of the Committee, and its response recorded for transmittal to the Committee. The results will also be incorporated into the just-launched NSF external review of BISO operations. PGAEO will meet with the external reviewers on April 26 to transmit the key questions from the PGA committee review [Done].