

# ICES Foundation

## Navigating Safely in the Midst of Rapid Geopolitical Change

**ICES Workshop VI -- Panel 9**

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# Historical Perspective -- Science acceptance and denial

- It should not be a surprise that ICES, or any scientific or technical expert, sometimes faces geopolitical resistance -- academic freedom.
- History is full of persons/groups who espouse “*alternative facts*”, and/or question the conclusions reached by scientific consensus.
- Two examples (of many):
  - *Since the 19thC* -- “**Flat Earth**” proponents, raising religious or other grounds who continue to challenge the Earth’s sphericity.
  - *Last week* -- President of the World Bank (proposed for the position by Pres. Trump) declines to accept there is any concern arising from global warming and climate change.

# A modest proposition :

Consider the following steps improve the dialog amongst Scientists, Policy-Makers and Other Stakeholders (including the General Public):

Each participant should attempt

- (a) to be candid and thorough in fulfilling their mandate.
- (b) to seek out and to implement means
  - (i) to listen to each other (*not at all obvious?*)
  - (ii) to communicate effectively with each other, and
  - (iii) to collaborate to achieve a useful common goal or purpose.

# ICES Members as neutral agents

- We recognize that Scientists and Policy-Makers each tend to work in their own “*world*,” using their own “*language*” and accepted protocols. Scientists are often seen as “*elite*.”
- We should openly accept that there are broader obligations and responsibilities -- beyond those in one’s own profession, relating to :
  - being candid and thorough in fulfilling current mandates; and
  - Listening carefully to what is being said elsewhere and taking a broader view of the issue at hand.

# Among the responsibilities of any expert (Scientific or Policy-Maker) Part 1

Responsibilities within one's own profession:

To consider honestly and in appropriate depth the likely consequences of the conclusions and alternatives presented and of any decisions made, or actions to be taken.

Not opposing anyone's right to challenge any scientific or political conclusion, but to do so responsibly, addressing scientific or political consensus and using methods accepted by the relevant community.

# Among the responsibilities of any expert (Scientific or Policy-Maker) Part 2

- Responsibility to respect other professions involved in the matter:
- We should expect that experts in all areas of science and technology, will learn more about political issues and options before engaging in politics or advocating political solutions.
- At the same time, while we often ask that policy-makers learn more about science, which is appropriate, we should urge policy-makers, and indeed all politicians, dealing with scientific issues, should learn more about the relevant science or technology before proposing or establishing political solutions having identified potential harmful consequences.

- *(example: abolition of the U.S. Congressional OTA)*

# Interim Conclusions / Recommendation

Attempt to communicate efficiently with all concerned persons about all ICES issues and conclusions and positions

## Recommendation

Panel 9's question is simply too much to consider, discuss fully and resolve during a period of 45 minutes in this ICES Workshop

Have a further meeting/discussion -- or prepare an ICES working paper -- to consider in depth the risks from geopolitical changes and develop how best ICES may navigate safely in the future.

# Q1: How can ICES make its views known to policymakers (and do so by steering clear of politics)? Part 1

## Workshop Comments (in order received)

### **(1) Learn more about ICES' information recipients (identify & know the targets)**

- Stay current with and grow ICES's network of influential players/journalists/commentators
- What scientific information are the "end users" of ICES' information seeking?
- Keep ICES model updated and evolving with public/policy-maker interests

### **(1) Clarify cases in which ICES wants to take a position based on scientific consensus**

- State clearly why the planet is in danger / alternative approaches-solutions
- Respect ICES "red-line" -- avoid becoming openly involved in political debate
- Stay focused on the sciences of Earth systems and environment



# Q1: How can ICES make its views known to policymakers (and do so by steering clear of politics)? Part 2

## **(3) Consider where to present and how best to word ICES position statements**

- Address the public and policy-makers from **all sides**
- Highlight the **positive aspects** of the message and its benefits/opportunities
- Annual resilience/sustainability progress reports (by an ICES committee?)
- Consider also economic issues and consequences (e.g., “*donut economics*”)
- Hold regular ICES briefing sessions presenting conclusions from ICES reviews

## **(4) Establish means of publishing/promoting ICES position statements**

- Publish ICES views in op-eds, press releases,
- Aim also for other media and social media ICES communications
- Publish ICES papers in high-impact journals
- Push for more tedtalks -- reinforce channels to the public & policy-makers
- Participate at international policy conferences (e.g., G-20, etc)

Q2: At what scale (sub-national, national, or international) does ICES have the best opportunities for making a difference? Why? Part 1

## **(1) International level**

- Avoid local and national politics - whole is greater than the sum of national/regional focus
- Take advantage of ICES' Geneva location with many international organizations
- Biennial International Conference with truly global significance (e.g., *"Future of Humanity"*)
- The big picture is very clear, save the biosphere.
- Start on a national level and scale up internationally (e.g., ICREST)

## Q2: At what scale (sub-national, national, or international) does ICES have the best opportunities for making a difference? Why? Part 2

### **(2) Local and/or national levels**

- Start at the regional level where there are social, environmental and economic impacts
- Take advantage of ICES' credibility with the Swiss government
  - (Haiti Earthquake Study, 10+ years of a Swiss Foundation)
- QLARM, a Global Database (population/buildings) can be improved with local data
- Behavioral aspects are aimed at individuals in local communities of action
- National changes can have international influence

### **(3) All levels**

- Annual ICES progress report, focus on all levels, relevant groups and adjacent topics
- Some roles of ICES (or a partner) are advisory – **avoid duplication**

# Q3: What emerging global issues should ICES be giving more attention to? Why? And how should it do so?

## **Issues identified in the Attendee's Comments (in order received):**

Energy

Interactive Earth systems and Human systems;

Potable water

Human role in keep climate under control.

Population Growth

Food Genetics

Existing programs: QLARM, ICREST

Oceans

Regenerative land use linked to climate change locally and water and moisture.

Open-science in a more and more rationalistic environment.

Accountability of nations and companies in climate impact.

Demystifying the science and methodology of resilience/sustainability