Code of Conduct for Scientists

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UNESCO
From the Hippocratic Oath to the Russell-Einstein Manifesto

- Hippocrates (ca. 470 b.c)
- Maimonides oath and prayer (end of XII c.)
- Leonardo da Vinci (end of XV c.)
- 20th Century:
  - Canadian “Ritual” for Engineers (1926)
  - Declaration of Geneva, the Physician’s Oath (1948)
  - Russell-Einstein Manifesto (1955)
The role of the United Nations

“Role of modern science and technology in the development of nations and the need to strengthen economic, technical and scientific co-operation among States”

Nov. 1974 – UNESCO 18th General Conference adopts the “Recommendation on the Status of Scientific Researchers” calling for:

✓ Scientific researchers’ highly responsible attitude
✓ Encouragement of spirit of community service
✓ Development of educational techniques for awakening and stimulating ethical personal qualities and habits of mind
✓ Reinforcement of scientific researchers’ sense of vocation
✓ Definition of scientific researcher’s ethical responsibilities and rights
The rise of international interest after 1974
(some examples …)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Document/Initiative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Mount Carmel Declaration on Technology and Moral Responsibility</td>
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<td>1984</td>
<td>Uppsala Code for Scientists</td>
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<td>1987</td>
<td>M.I.T. Biologists Pledge</td>
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<td>1987</td>
<td>Hippocratic Oath for Scientists (Nuclear Age Peace Foundation)</td>
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<td>1988</td>
<td>Buenos Aires Oath</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>Toronto Resolution</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>Scientists Pledge not to take part in military-directed research (SANA, London)</td>
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The UNESCO/ICSU World Conference on Science
Budapest, 1999

- Special attention to ethical principles and responsibilities in the practice of science
- The WCS International Forum of Young Scientists strongly supports the establishment of a scientific Hippocratic Oath
- The final document “Science Agenda – A framework for action” states:
  - Ethics and responsibility in science should be an integral part of the education and training of all scientists
  - Young scientists should be appropriately encouraged to respect and adhere to the basic ethical principles and responsibilities of science
  - COMEST and ICSU have a special responsibility to follow up on this issue

- 11 Sept. 2001 - the terrorist attack against USA adds a specific anti-terrorism concern to the scientific ethics agenda

- October 2001 - UN Secretary-General establishes a "Policy Working Group on the United Nations and Terrorism" to identify longer-term implications and broad policy dimensions of terrorism for the United Nations

- 2002 - The Working Group issues a Report with 31 Recommendations
Recommendation 21

“Relevant UN offices should be tasked with producing proposals to reinforce ethical norms, and the creation of codes of conduct for scientists, through international and national scientific societies and institutions that teach sciences or engineering skills related to weapons technologies, should be encouraged.

Such codes of conduct would aim to prevent the involvement of defence scientists or technical experts in terrorist activities and restrict public access to knowledge and expertise on the development, production, stockpiling and use of weapons of mass destruction or related technologies.”

➢ The UN General Assembly and Security Council endorse the Report and its Recommendations, transmitting it to all the Organizations and Specialized Agencies of the United Nations System

➢ February 2003 - A UN Inter-Agency Consultative Meeting is held at UNESCO HQs in Paris, to discuss Recommendation 10 (focused on education, tolerance and respect of human dignity) and Recommendation 21 of the Report

- Inter-Agency meeting - General Recommendations:
  - Encouraging ethical codes of conduct for scientists and engineers
  - Promoting ethics of science education and awareness
  - COMEST could play a decisive role in fostering dialogue on education and ethics of science
  - Involvement of COMEST together with ICSU in the field of the responsibility of scientists

- The ethical task given by the WCS to COMEST and ICSU is recalled and reinforced
ICSU Standards for Ethics and Responsibility in Science (2001)

- ICSU research
  - takes into account 115 ethical standards for science (39 international and 23 national)
  - shows an exponential increase of the number of standards over the years (6 before 1970; more than 40 during last 5 years)
ICSU Standards for Ethics and Responsibility in Science (2001)

- Material is classified into 15 categories
  - oath, pledge, code, guidelines, declaration, principles, appeal, recommendation, manifesto, statement, declaration, resolution, convention, charter, law, others

- Five cluster groups
  - pledge, guidelines, statement, law, others

- Out of 115 ethical standards, only 6 are oaths and pledges, as an oath is perceived to be of a more binding nature than mere guidelines
### ICSU Standards for Ethics and Responsibility in Science (2001)

- **Core traits or virtues related to individual behaviour:**
  - Honesty | Openness | Fairness
  - Truthfulness | Accuracy | Conscientiousness
  - Respect | Collaboration | Loyalty

- **Core traits or virtues related to the scientific community:**
  - Social responsibility | Environmental responsibility
  - Sustainable development | Socio-economic development
  - Social welfare | Socio economic equity
  - Gender equality | Scientific freedom
  - Peace | Democratic development
  - Human rights
The Way Forward

- **Steps:**
  1. Request - UNESCO Executive Board (Spring 2004)
  2. Preliminary Evaluation - 32nd UNESCO General Conference (Fall 2005)
  3. Mandate for a Declaration including an Oath or Pledge to be ready by Fall 2007

- 169 EX/Decision 3.6.1 (April 2004) requested the Director-General, with COMEST and ICSU advice, to undertake studies on the advisability of elaborating an international declaration on science ethics to serve as a basis for an ethical code of conduct for scientists.
A meeting of prominent scientists, experts and representative of other international organizations on March 7, at UNESCO Headquarters

- Mr Robert Coupland, International Red Cross, Legal Division
- Mr Malcolm Dando, United Nations Institute for Disarmament
- Mr. Pieter Drenth, All European Academies
- Mr. Jens Fenstad, Chair of COMEST
- Mr. Andre Jaegle, World Federation of Scientific Workers
- Mrs Michele Jean, President of the International Bioethics Committee
- Mr. Alex Michaelos, Canadian Commission for UNESCO
- Mr. Graham Pearson, University of Bradford, Department of Peace Studies
- Mr. Cathage Smith, International Council for Science (ICSU)
- Mr. Sang-yong Song, Member of COMEST
- Mr. Zbigniew Szawarski, Warsaw University, Faculty of Philosophy and Sociology
- Mr. Hub Zwart, Radboud University Nijmegen, Faculty of Sciences
- Ms. Julia Hasler, Natural Science Sector, UNESCO
Questions answered by the expert group:

1. What kind of code would be feasible?
2. The contents, scope, focus, character
3. Consensus building
4. Political support
5. Strategies of implementation
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