

WORKING GROUP FOR IMPROVING ACCESS TO SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Terms of Reference

1. Background

A 1982 UNESCO report states that “assimilation of scientific and technological information is an essential precondition for progress in developing countries”. Enhancing science, engineering and technology (SET) capacity in developing countries is greatly hampered by their inability to access scientific information, including journals, literature and data. Furthermore, SET development cannot be restricted to research and higher education institutions; the long-term development of SET capacity also depends on a broader social understanding of and appreciation for the sciences, involving effective communication to better inform and educate the public and policy makers alike.

2. Mandate

The primary function of the Working Group is to assist the Natural Sciences Committee in fulfilling its responsibilities in respect to building SET capacity through improving access to scientific information in developing countries.

3. Aims

- 3.1. To improve access to research outputs for developing country researchers, students, practitioners, policy-makers and journalists.
- 3.2. To increase readership and authorship from developing country researchers.
- 3.3. To broaden social understanding of and appreciation for the sciences in developing countries through promoting effective science communication.

4. Objectives

- 4.1. To promote the provision of affordable and effective access to information through journal access programmes, open access initiatives, associated infrastructure, and other relevant means.
- 4.2. To promote avenues for developing country scientists to share their research in both regional, sub-regional and global contexts.
- 4.3. To explore current issues relating to the provision of data and information and encourage action as and where necessary.
- 4.4. To increase awareness of UNESCO by improving liaison with stakeholders in the C&I sector, for example publishers, learned societies, librarians and coordinators.
- 4.5. To encourage the development of responsible science communication -- including science journalism -- through both improving the channels through which information about science is communicated, and building the professional skills of science journalists and other communicators.

5. Duration and Timing

- 5.1. The Working Group will operate for the period of time required to carry out its function.
- 5.2. The Working Group shall hold meetings as required to carry out its function.

UPDATED AND APPROVED BY THE NATURAL SCIENCES COMMITTEE: 20 May 2009