

Research Staff Collegium

Thursday, 8 June 2023

11.00

Via Zoom

Minutes taker: Karen Meijer



Agenda

1) Notes of the last meeting and any matters arising

No comments on the minutes of the last RSC meeting (May 2).

- Dan proposes a male volunteer for the minutes of the next meeting after summer.

2) Report back on Governing Board meeting:

- General
 - Board members have appreciated the interaction with SIPRI staff. Anyone who would like to follow up with one of the board members should feel free to do so.
 - Joakim reflected on the positive atmosphere and emphasized the importance of having board members visit in person to allow interaction with staff. Therefore, board meetings will never be hybrid. Unfortunately, this meant the absence of some board members at the most recent meeting, all for good reasons.
 - Timo added that presence of all board members could have resulted in a more diverse discussion and asked whether SMT or Stefan Löfven would reach out to the board members who were not there, to update them and ask inputs. Dan agreed that the discussion becomes better if more board members participate and bring in more perspectives, which is why we would like have more board members (see next point). Regarding reaching out to absent board members, Dan commented that the board members were contacted in advance, but no specific effort was planned to inform them afterwards.
 - The board took notice of SIPRI's code of conduct and accepted to sign onto it.
- Board membership
 - There are still two vacancies in the Board, and many names have been suggested (see previous minutes). As was mentioned in the previous meeting, Ilona Szabó was unable to accept the invitation to become a Board member.
 - There is a wish to attract Board members who are younger than current average board members' age. However, the people meeting this criterion often have day jobs and young families, making it more difficult for them to commit to international travel twice a year.
 - In addition to the suggestions listed earlier (see previous minutes), there are good contacts in Colombia, and names can still be suggested.
 - Timo suggested institutionalizing the possibility to propose new Board members throughout the year, in order to create a more continuous conversation, because now staff is confronted with proposed names during the RSC. Dan agreed that it would be good to develop such a structure.
 - Shivan suggested another name to be considered for Board membership: Barham Salih, Former President of Iraq. Information on him can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barham_Salih
 - The Board membership of Feodor Voitovskiy was discussed with the Board. The Board mandated Dan to start a conversation with Feodor about the war in Ukraine and the Russian aggression, to understand his views and take it from there.

- Strategy
 - A think piece regarding the content of a new strategy was presented and discussed with the Board; the content was in line with Dan's presentation and discussions at the clusters and other teams. The latest document will be made available online.
 - The Board was on board with the idea of a global conversation with the starting point of a basis in ethics, law and peace, as in the current institute strategy.
 - The Board also agreed with the strategy of maintaining what we have, but also needing to innovate in order to thrive.
 - Some of these innovations are adaptations and additions in what we are doing already, some could be completely new topics. For example, earlier this included outer space; now it is suggested to focus also on cyber. In addition, it was suggested to consolidate the development of knowledge and research on Colombia and the Horn of Africa into more programmatic approaches in these areas.
 - Process going forward: Dan will develop a paper that goes one step further, to be discussed with SMT and with staff in October, to be then presented at the next Board meeting in November.
 - Timo asked if the Board member who were absent would be given an opportunity to respond before the next meeting. Dan agreed this would be a good idea.
 - Vincent asked about Board views on how SIPRI should respond to the situation in Ukraine. The Board discussion focused on the future of the European Security program, especially after Ian Anthony's departure. The impression is that although the Board sees it as important to devote attention to the war in Ukraine, they emphasize not to let other important issues be lost from sight. Also, it is important to identify where SIPRI can add value in addition to the research and analysis that is being done by other research centres; SIPRI's niche and added value could focus on implications of the war away from the frontline, such as food security, environmental implications, European Security architecture and political discourse.
 - Florian added that a wider view on Eastern Europe could be of interest. Current discussion seems one sided, and it could be of interest to bring broader SIPRI views into an Eastern European space.
 - Dan added that EU PSC ambassadors will visit Sweden next week, who will focus on Ukraine and NATO enlargement. When they visit SIPRI, we focus on environment, which shows that they as well are interested in keeping broader discussions going.
 - The New Agenda for Peace is discussed as topic for the strategy. A first draft will come out by the end of the month, and it is important to read with interest as well as critically, as something to draw inspiration from. The follow-up of the SDGs could also be a topic of interests. In light of these topics, it could be relevant to consider internal coordination on UN-related processes.
 - Giovanna asked about key performance indicators (KPIs). Dan remarked that the intention of the Board and the SMT is to develop KPIs at the same time as the strategy. The document with KPIs for 2022 will be shared.
 - Jannie remarked that is important to consider the role of the two primary platforms we have, the Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development and the Stockholm Security Conference, in facilitating a global conversation.

Fundraising was discussed following the overview of finances.

3) Finances

- Christina presented the latest overview of the institutes finances, with the overall message that the financial situation for 2023 looks positive. The strategic grant is now secured at 20

MSEK. The core grant remained the same, however, inflation affects its actual value. There are still additional funds to be identified and acquired, but this is normal at this time of the year. Also, if some funds are not raised, there is some flexibility to reduce cost.

- In response to questions, it was explained that the costs are distributed differently (more on projects, less on core).
- Dan, Christina and Ulla agreed that with the situation as it looks now, staff do not have to worry about contracts not being extended because of the financial situation.
- Late decisions on short term grants that require spending before the end of the year could result in capacity issues. Possible solutions could be to pool research assistants across clusters, if expertise allows or hiring consultants, which may, however, not contribute to institutional knowledge development.
- Instead of recruiting extra staff solely for core fund raising, the possibility of recruitment to support program development will be explored. This has Board and SMT approval. Such a person would be at the interface between research teams and the project management office, and provide assistance in transforming an idea into a plan and a proposal.

3) Going live (discussion of whether to have RSCs in person or continue on Zoom)

- A live RSC is suggested to allow more active participation, but requires a large room. The kitchen is the largest space in the office and could seat 62 persons, and if needed additional chairs could be brought in from basement offices. The conference room would require changing to theatre style, which is cumbersome and not conducive to active participation either.
- A brief vote showed mostly a positive response to in person RSCs. An argument against is that the kitchen is not a suitable space for a work meeting. Another downside is that online participation would be difficult to facilitate in the kitchen, however, as with the Monday Morning Meetings, a less active participation would be possible.
- As an alternative solution, it was proposed that only those RSC meetings that require staff discussion would be in person, and that RSC meeting with a more information-sharing character could remain online. A further suggestion to this would be to rent a nearby meeting room nearby. If this were only a few times a year, it could develop into a half day including break out discussions for more interaction.

4) Away day

For the next away day, it is proposed to have a committee that organizes it. Anyone interested is requested to inform Sepideh, who will ensure the right number and gender balance.

5) AOB

No other issues raised.

List of participants

Abeer Ahmad	Martina Selmi
Alaa Tartir	Mathew George
Alemnesh Belatchew	Mirella Bilalagic
Amal Bourhrous	Nan Tian
Amelie Lutz	Nikos Politis
Ana Assis	Noah Bell
Anniek Barnhoorn	Noel Kelly
Annika Salisbury	Olle Persson
Barbara Becht	Priscilla Frimpong Boateng
Caroline Delgado	Sepideh Soltaninia
Casper Trimmer	Shannon Kile
Cecilia Bagge	Shivan Fazil
Claire McAllister	Shourjya Deb
Claudia Pfeifer	Siemon Wezeman
Dan Smith	Simone Bunse
Diego Lopes	Sofie Waller Snygg
Elin Elmgren	Stephanie Blenckner
Emelie Poignant Khafagi	Tamar Zuurveld
Emilie Broek	Timo Smit
Emma Zetterström	Tytti Erästö
Evelina Francesca Cristofano	Ulla Hurtig Nielsen
Farah Hegazi	Vincent Boulain
Fei Su	Virginie Baudais
Felicia Kihlberg	Vitaly Fedchenko
Florian Krampe	Vladislav Chernavskikh
Frederic Daudon	Vongai Murugani
Giovanna Maletta	Xiao Liang
Hedvig Brage	
Jannie Lilja	
Jiayi Zhou	
Joakim Vaverka	
John Batho	
Karen Meijer	
Kolja Brockmann	
Kristina Sandberg	
Laura Bruun	
Lauriane Heau	
Lorenzo Scarazzato	
Louise Edgren	
Luc van de Goor	
Lucas Wiktorsson	
Magdalena Söderqvist	
Maria Gillgren	
Maria Volakaki	
Marie Riquier	