

Research Staff Collegium
Tuesday, 4 June 2024

In the canteen
Minute-taker: Simone Bunse



Agenda

1) Report back from May Governing Board meeting

- **Key issues.** Joakim provided an update on the results of SIPRI's May Governing Board meeting highlighting the open and positive dynamic between current members, most of whom know each other well after serving on the Board for several years. SIPRI has one new board member, Dr Noha El-Mikawy from Egypt. Key issues raised at the May Governing Board meeting included SIPRI's finances, the appointment of SIPRI's next director, and SIPRI's new 5-year strategy which Dan has been steering with input from SIPRI staff.
- **5-year SIPRI strategy.** The Governing Board endorsed the new 5-year strategy with minor tweaks and adjustments which Dan will address over the coming weeks. Dan expects to share SIPRI's strategy for 2024–2029 with staff before the summer break.
- **Lunch discussions with staff.** SIPRI's Governing Board members valued the lunch discussions with SIPRI staff on the implications of Sweden's accession to NATO and debriefed on key insights gained from the conversations. They noted that discussions moved beyond the topic of NATO membership to the current broader political climate.
- **SIPRI yearbook.** The Governing Board discussed potential cost reductions related to the SIPRI Yearbook which remains a unique reference work. Key considerations include shortening the 700-page long publication and streamlining working processes. The Governing Board agreed to continue publishing a hardy copy, while making it significantly shorter, and asking Dan and the editorial team to do so in a way that would release financial savings. Timo stressed that in the publication cost of the yearbook, researchers' time also needs to be considered. Yearbook summaries will continue to be translated. As long as there is translation funding, SIPRI would also like to continue translating into Ukrainian, Arabic and Chinese. Currently, the Swiss government funds the Ukrainian and Chinese translations. To obtain guidance on which parts of the SIPRI Yearbook readers value most and what parts to shorten or cut, a survey will be sent to key contacts from the diplomatic corps and research institutions. Dan will share the survey in the coming days.
- **Board composition.** The Board currently has two vacant seats. Given there is no member from Latin America, the Board has agreed to reapproach Ilona Szabó de

Carvalho who was unable to accept a previous invitation to join SIPRI's Governing Board due to her commitments at the Igarapé Institute in Brazil. Dan encouraged members of the RSC to think of additional names of people and their institutional affiliations who could bring diverse perspectives to SIPRI's Governing Board. Timo proposed Pekka Haavisto, former Finnish Minister of Foreign Affairs, as a potential additional Board member. Additional suggestions will be discussed at SIPRI's autumn Governing Board meeting. SIPRI's Governing Board can have up to nine members but has usually had eight.

- **Input from SIPRI's staff observer.** Timo commented that the interaction between SIPRI board members and staff was much appreciated. He highlighted the need for more cross-institute conversations (like the lunch conversation between SIPRI Board and staff members. He mentioned that SIPRI's Governing Board members had commented very positively on the meeting with the Unions' representatives.
- **Idea of Swedish advisory body.** Timo noted that there had been a proposal during the Board meeting for SIPRI to have a Swedish advisory body akin to an informal 'group of friends'. Stefan, Joakim and Dan discussed the idea of creating a Swedish advisory board for SIPRI. Considering recent experiences with a Swedish tabloid, however, there are concerns over how members of such a board might react if approached by a journalist. Discussion of the implementation of this idea is paused at the moment. The merits of a Swedish advisory committee require further thought.

2) Update on Institute finances

- Kristina reported on SIPRI's finances, recognizing staff worries related to the institute's current financial situation. A presentation with the details was shared with staff ahead of the RSC. The overview presented was the same that SIPRI's Board reviewed. The estimates were conservative and based on assumptions that are monitored continuously.
- Key developments include: SIPRI's core grant has remained the same in nominal terms, meaning its real value has declined due to inflation (and its share of total income has also steadily declined); the strategic grant has been reduced by over 50 percent in the past 2 years; and project grant funding has increased.
- Given the increased importance of project grant acquisition, Fred and Luc have new responsibilities connected to fundraising. All researchers are invited to discuss and develop ideas that can contribute to fundraising.
- SIPRI's current projections show a funding gap. Kristina highlighted the positive trend connected to the funding applications that are currently out but mentioned that a 'bite' into SIPRI's reserves is likely.
- SIPRI is adjusting to this new financial reality. Among fundraising efforts are continuing conversations with embassies, the private sector and key parliamentary committees.
- Dan stressed that in the short term, SIPRI is spending on 'must haves' rather than 'nice to haves' and noted some slowdown between staff hires. However, he emphasized that the solution is to raise more money because there are not many cuts SIPRI can make.

Any savings to the yearbook, for example, are marginal in their effect on our overall finance.

- Dan also stressed that SIPRI should keep investing rather than drastically reducing activities as that makes it less likely for donors to find activities to support.

3) Recruitment of the next SIPRI Director

- Joakim thanked the RSC for its contribution to the process of recruiting SIPRI's next director, presented the timeline, and shared the advertisement for the position. The advertisement for the position will be posted shortly with an application deadline in mid-October 2024. The recruitment committee is chaired by Stefan Löfven; its other members are Jessica Mathews, Mohamed Ibn Chambas and Radha Kumar, and they will be joined by Timo as staff observer. The committee will prepare a shortlist of candidates for the autumn Board meeting. Interviews with the top three to four candidates will follow in December 2024. The recruitment committee will recommend a new director to the full board in January 2025. Ideally, the new director should participate in the May 2025 SIPRI Governing Board meeting and start the new role on 1 September 2025. The RSC will be updated throughout this process.
- Precise details of the interview process, including interaction between the candidates and SIPRI's staff and Board members will be developed over the coming months. SIPRI's Governing Board appoints the director after consultation with the RSC.
- Members of the RSC were encouraged to help circulate the advert for SIPRI's next director.

4) Recruitment of the next Deputy Director

- SIPRI's Deputy Director is appointed by the Board. Dan and Kristina will conduct online interviews for this position between June 5 and June 14. In-person interviews will follow. The Board will make its decision either in an online meeting or by email exchange, yet to be decided which. Four candidates (two men and two women) have been shortlisted out of around 20 applicants. Two of the four short-listed applicants are currently based outside of Sweden, two are Stockholm-based. Two are currently working with the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while the other two have a background in Swedish agencies. The recruitment process also foresees meetings with a small, but representative group of staff members.

5) AOB

- No other issues were brought forward by the RSC.