

U.S. Rules Could Muffle Scientific Voices

The U.S. government has issued new rules on interactions between U.S. citizens and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) that some scientific organizations fear could limit access to the international scientific and cultural body by U.S. experts. But U.S. officials say the changes are intended simply to keep the government in the loop.

"It certainly has the power of acting as a filtering process," says Christopher Keane. He represents the American Geological Institute on the U.S. National Commission to UNESCO, a 100-member body appointed by the U.S. government to coordinate communications between its citizens and UNESCO that was briefed on the directive last month at its first meeting. "But it's a little hard to hang them on it until there's evidence" that the U.S. government is preventing UNESCO from accessing the experts it needs, says Keane.

The 5 May directive, from U.S. Ambassador Louise Oliver to UNESCO Director General Koichiro Matsuura, requires UNESCO to consult U.S. officials before partnering with organizations or citizens in the United States. It also asks UNESCO to check with the U.S. permanent delegation and the commission before planning any U.S. events.

U.S. individuals and institutions, it adds, must channel all communications through the commission and avoid direct contact with the UNESCO secretariat in Paris.

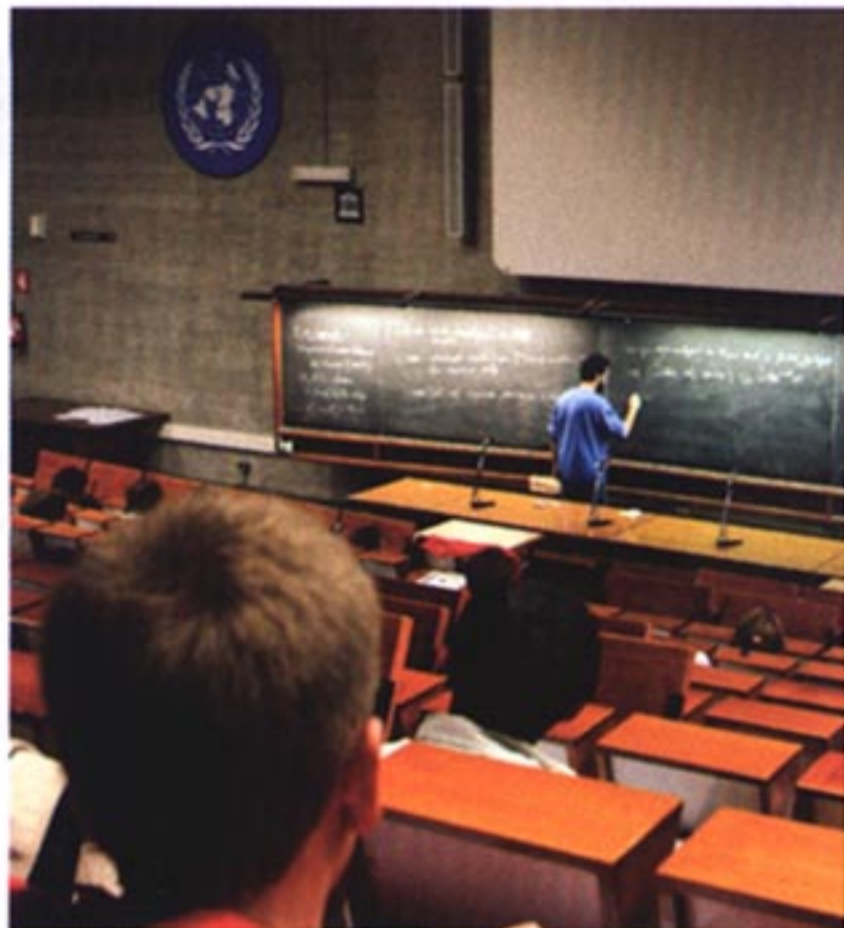
U.S. officials say the directive is meant to keep the U.S. government informed about UNESCO's dealings with nongovernmental organizations and is consistent with UNESCO's own regulations. The memo "absolutely does not impose a vetting mecha-

nism," says Andrew Koss, a State Department official who serves as the deputy chief of the U.S. mission. "Advance consultation simply means that if UNESCO comes to us with a list of potential partners, we might offer additional names to help them broaden their horizons." The United States rejoined UNESCO 2 years ago after dropping out in 1984.

But others say the directive goes far beyond the practices of most member states, which only expect UNESCO to inform their national commissions about a given activity after the details have been worked out. "The memo implies that UNESCO's decisions to engage U.S. scientists and engineers—even when they are being selected for their expertise and not as official U.S. representatives—need to be vetted by the U.S. government," says Irving Lerch, chair-elect of the American Physical Society's Forum on International Physics. Lerch, who's also a trustee for Friends of UNESCO, says the procedure would allow the U.S. government to control the flow of scientific opinion from the research community to UNESCO.

The memo has also sparked concern among some managers of UNESCO's scientific programs. "If we were to follow this literally, organizing routine scientific meetings could get very difficult for us," says K. R. Sreenivasan, director of the International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste, Italy, which is a part of UNESCO. "We'd like to invite U.S. scientists who are appropriate for us, not those who have been approved by the U.S. government."

—YUDHIJIT BHATTACHARJEE



Veto power. New directive could restrict U.S. access to meetings such as this one at the International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste, Italy.

ANTITERRORISM

Defense Rules Would Pinch Foreign-Born Scientists

The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) has proposed a rule that would make it harder for universities to involve foreign nationals in unclassified research projects funded by the agency. The additional security arrangements required by the rule are at odds with traditional practices, say university administrators. The result, they warn, will be fewer opportunities for many researchers born abroad.

The rule, published in the 12 July *Federal Register* (www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/a050712c.html), is intended to beef up DOD's compliance with export-control regulations aimed at restricting the transfer of certain technologies to countries viewed as threats to national security. The Commerce Department earlier this year proposed modifying those regulations so that universities must obtain a license before engaging nationals from a list of countries that includes China, India, and Rus-

sia (*Science*, 13 May, p. 938). Universities have traditionally considered themselves exempt from this requirement under what is known as the fundamental research exemption.

By not mentioning the fundamental research exemption, the DOD rule would apply to all DOD-sponsored research. To comply, universities and companies working on defense projects would not only need licenses to enable foreign nationals to participate in the research but would also need to protect export-controlled information through an "access control plan" that includes "unique badging requirements for foreign nationals" and "segregated work areas." The requirements are in line with recommendations last year from DOD's Inspector General, who concluded that the agency did not have "adequate processes to identify unclassified export-controlled technology and to prevent

unauthorized disclosure to foreign nationals" (*Science*, 23 April 2004, p. 500).

University officials foresee "draconian clauses" in research contracts that would make it more difficult for them to involve foreign nationals in projects, says Toby Smith, senior federal relations officer for the Association of American Universities in Washington, D.C. Many universities would have to turn down such contracts either because of the cost of additional security or to avoid violating their own nondiscrimination policies, Smith says. "Walling off labs, making foreign graduate students wear badges—it's just not what we do at a university," says Paul Powell, assistant director of the Office of Sponsored Programs at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge.

The comment period closes 12 September.

—YUDHIJIT BHATTACHARJEE