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3 December 2024

**EXECUTIVE COUNCIL TO THE
INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR
GLOBAL CHANGE RESEARCH
Fifty-eight meeting (EC-58)
Videoconference, 6 November 2024**

Report of the 58th meeting of the IAI Executive Council

1. This document has been prepared by the IAI Directorate.

Introduction

2. Article VI, paragraph 3 of the *Agreement establishing the Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research (IAI)*, states:

The Executive Council shall meet at least twice a year and shall strive to hold its meetings in different locations among the Parties.

3. In accordance with Article VI, paragraph 3, of the *Agreement*, the 58th meeting of the Executive Council was held via videoconference on 6 November 2024 and represented the second and final meeting in the year 2024.
4. The meeting was chaired by the Chair of the EC, Maria Uhle, United States, Milagro Mainieri, Panama, was the First Vice-Chair and Stephanie Janetos, Canada, was the Second Vice-Chair.
5. The following Parties to the *Agreement* with membership in the Executive Council attended the meeting: Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, United States, and Uruguay.
6. One member of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and one member of the Science Policy Advisory Committee (SPAC) attended the meeting.

7. The following IAI Associate organizations attended the meeting as Observers: Center for Climate and Resilience Research (CR2), Humboldt Institute.
8. The list of observer Parties and other observers attending the meeting is provided on the EC-58 web page¹.

Opening of the meeting

Welcome by the Chair of the Executive Council

9. The Chair of the EC cordially welcomed the participants to the meeting and expressed her gratitude to EC members for their participation in the meeting and their support of the IAI. She expressed appreciation for the ongoing support from all the Parties. She welcomed the new Science Director, Dr. Omar Lopez, who will lead upcoming scientific initiatives.

Agenda item 1: Approval of the agenda

10. The Chair invited members of the Executive Council to approve the agenda (document no. IAI/EC/58/1).
11. The agenda was approved by consensus.

Agenda item 2: Review of Decisions related to the Core Budget adopted at the 32nd meeting of the Conference of the Parties

12. The Executive Council took note of document IAI/EC/58/2, which contains the Decisions related to the Core Budget adopted at the 32nd meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Agenda item 3: Overview of the Core Budget and Country Contributions for FY 2024-2025

13. The Chair opened this agenda item by inviting the IAI Directorate to present a summary of the Core Budget and country contributions received to date.
14. The Director of Administration and Finance presented an update on the status of country contributions and the operational budget. She highlighted the recent 20% increase in voluntary contributions for FY2024-2025 as agreed upon by the Conference of the Parties (CoP-32) to strengthen the IAI's operational stability.
15. In response to a specific request from one Party, the Directorate clarified that budget tables are integrated into the CoP documentation for future reference.
16. Canada reminded the Parties that contributions to the core budget are voluntary and that in-kind contributions are recognized.

¹See: <https://www.iai.int/en/post/detail/EC-58>

17. Panama asked that the payment request be sent to the new authorities at the Ministry of Environment.

Agenda item 4: Updates on the move of the IAI Headquarters to Panama

18. The Executive Director updated participants on the establishment of the IAI's new headquarters in Panama. She acknowledged the critical support from Panama and Uruguay in facilitating the smooth and rapid transition.
19. She informed that on 21 June 2024, the agreement concerning the establishment of the headquarters of the IAI Directorate was signed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Panama.
20. She detailed the successful relocation of IAI's headquarters from Uruguay to Panama. In coordination with Panama's SENACYT, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Environment, the move included relocating international staff and their families and setting up a temporary office for the Directorate's operations at the City of Knowledge.
21. By early 2025, the Directorate expects to have a permanent office established.
22. The process to open a new bank account in Panama is underway.
23. Panama, represented by SENACYT, reiterated its commitment to support the completion of all necessary administrative procedures.
24. The Chair extended her thanks once again to Uruguay and Panama for ensuring a seamless transition.

Agenda item 5: Summary report of the Directorate's activities to implement the Decisions adopted at the 32nd meeting of the Conference of the Parties

a. **Science**

25. The Director of Science, presented a summary of the main activities undertaken by the Directorate to advance IAI's agenda.
26. One of the key initiatives highlighted was the Tropical Forests Collaborative Research Action (CRA), launched in collaboration with the Belmont Forum and The Research and Innovation Support Foundation of Santa Catarina State (FAPESC) of Brazil. This call, opened in June, focuses on urgent actions and global implications for tropical forest conservation. Aimed at fostering transdisciplinary environmental research, the call included a training program through the IAI's Transdisciplinary Academy, where 20 teams representing 13 countries from across the Americas participated in a 32-hour virtual course. This initiative attracted diverse participants, including indigenous and local community leaders, and representatives from local organizations. Following the training, 14 project proposals were submitted for seed grant funding, and nine were selected, with

financial support from FAPESC, National Secretariat of Science, Technology, and Innovation of the Republic of Panama (SENACYT), and the IAI.

27. To facilitate engagement and collaboration among researchers preparing for the Tropical Forests CRA, the Directorate held office hours and networking sessions. These gatherings allowed researchers from the Americas, Asia, and Africa to connect and form transdisciplinary teams, meeting the Belmont Forum requirement of multi-country collaboration for funding.
28. He also provided an update on future projects, including the upcoming Belmont Forum Ocean CRA in 2025. The Science Directorate participated in the recent The Latin American Congress of Marine Sciences (COLACMAR) meeting in Brazil, gathering input to refine the scope of this call. The Ocean CRA, anticipated to launch in June 2025 during the UN Oceans Conference, is intended to support regional ocean, coast, and island research priorities worldwide. The SAC and SPAC have provided input via the Oceans advisory body established by the Directorate.
29. Further highlights included the ongoing coordination of the SAC and SPAC, which meet monthly to support the implementation of the IAI's strategic plan. Researchers from IAI's funding programs focused on migration and climate-health interconnections will prepare to share results with the SAC and SPAC before presenting concise summaries to IAI Parties. The Data Open Access Subcommittee has developed a work plan for 2024-2025, updating open data policies to streamline data generated by IAI-supported research.
30. Additional updates covered the LACI initiative, which is focused on climate risk assessment in the La Plata basin, and various small grants supporting projects in climate, environment, and health. Regular advisory sessions with grantees have been conducted to support their progress and enhance reporting standards for clearer communication with IAI Parties.
31. The Gender Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee has been active, working to establish advisory groups for Indigenous Peoples and local communities. The EDI subcommittee presented IAI's gender policy to IAI staff and fellows in October, with plans to expand this work further.
32. The Directorate's participation in COP16 of the Convention on Biodiversity was also noted, where the Directorate engaged with partners, including IDEAM and the Humboldt Institute in Colombia, and the Smithsonian Institute, to discuss science on biodiversity and conservation.
33. In closing, the Director of Science highlighted the importance of ongoing networking and discussions to follow-up on these initiatives. The Directorate remains available for any further inquiries via email.
34. Following the presentation by the Director of Science, the Directorate introduced a synthesis video showcasing the IAI's Small Grants Program (SGP), which concluded in 2022. The video identified recommendations from community members to make

transdisciplinary science more equitable and inclusive. It was explained that creating the video involved immersive fieldwork, including interviews and workshops in local communities where SGP projects had been implemented.

35. Attendees were invited to consider the ideas and proposals from these communities, emphasizing their potential to inform future transdisciplinary research funded by the IAI. These reflections, drawn directly from on-the-ground experiences, offer valuable guidance for researchers, community partners, and science funders committed to advancing fair and inclusive transdisciplinary science.
36. Following the video presentation, the Directorate informed that the video would be made publicly accessible on the IAI website to enable wider sharing and visibility.
37. The Directorate further explained that the video would contribute to a special training module within the Transdisciplinary Academy's virtual curriculum. This module, focusing on community perspectives, aims to offer recommendations for enhancing inclusivity and effectiveness in transdisciplinary science practices. The material gathered was highlighted as a valuable resource to improve the management and implementation of such initiatives through collaborative engagement with communities.

b. Science Diplomacy Center (SDC) and STeP Program

38. The Director of the SDC provided an overview of the three foundational pillars guiding the work of the Science Diplomacy Center:
 - i. **Capacity Building:** Developing and strengthening science diplomacy skills within IAI member countries. This involves organizing activities and workshops tailored to enhance the science diplomacy capacities of national stakeholders.
 - ii. **Emerging Issues:** Addressing priority topics identified by the CoP, such as artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and blockchain. An expert group has been established to guide work on these emerging fields, and related webinars have been conducted to engage the regional scientific community.
 - iii. **Science Diplomacy Repository:** Creating a centralized repository of science diplomacy resources. This repository collects insights and information from consultations with member countries, focal points, advisory committees, and the broader scientific community to support accessible and relevant resources for science diplomacy.
39. Under the first pillar, the Center has been developing and organizing a series of science diplomacy activities tailored to the specific needs of various countries, aiming to support and enhance national capacities in this area. Further details on these activities were shared as part of the broader presentation on the Center's ongoing initiatives.
40. She highlighted the ongoing development of the science diplomacy curriculum covering modules on scientific negotiation, real-world case studies, and emerging technologies, co-created with the University of São Paulo, which will launch in early 2025. This curriculum includes four modules covering topics such as science diplomacy, innovation diplomacy,

and case studies on transboundary issues. Initial testing with STEP program alumni is underway to ensure the curriculum's relevance and impact for government officials and researchers.

41. On emerging issues, she mentioned the formation of an expert group focused on artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and blockchain, in alignment with CoP Decisions. Webinars have been organized to engage the scientific community on these topics, fostering dialogue across the region. Furthermore, The SDC Director highlighted the STEP Fellowship expansion, currently involving 38 fellows from 13 countries. Noteworthy developments include the new Brazil cohort focusing on bioeconomy, a priority for national development, with mentorship provided by both public and private sector leaders. She mentioned that several leadership and policy workshops were planned for 2025 in Brazil, Chile, and Paraguay.
42. The Directorate has also worked on partnerships, most notably organizing science diplomacy events in Panama aligned with national priorities. These workshops promoted synergies with IAI's science programs and yielded outputs such as a white paper with recommendations for mangrove and estuary conservation, which will be further disseminated in an upcoming webinar.
43. She emphasized the importance of regional collaboration, with countries like Guatemala expressing interest in formal science diplomacy training. Guatemala proposed organizing a regional training program that could also involve other Central American nations, potentially in collaboration with the Central American Integration System (SICA), to strengthen shared efforts on global environmental issues.
44. For Pillar 3: Science Diplomacy Repository, the IAI Science Diplomacy Center has focused on gathering resources and insights to build a comprehensive repository. This effort involves conducting consultations and dialogues with IAI member countries, national focal points, the Science Diplomacy Advisory Committee, associated members, and the broader scientific community. These discussions aim to collect valuable information and identify best practices that are pertinent to science diplomacy.
45. Based on the recommendations from these consultations, the Center is curating relevant content that addresses both the priorities in science diplomacy and emerging themes. Additionally, the repository will be integrated into the IAI website, where materials will be organized for accessible reference by Parties. This initiative aims to enhance transparency and provide an informed foundation for decision-making across the IAI network, supporting member countries in their science diplomacy efforts and aligning with regional and global priorities.

c. Communications, Virtual Campus, and Partnerships

46. The Strategic Advisor provided an overview of recent communications aimed at strengthening engagement and support for Parties. A new [compendium](#) focusing on health, climate, and the environment in Latin America and the Caribbean was published, accessible in Spanish, English, and Portuguese. This resource, available in both digital

and print formats, has seen significant interest, with hundreds of downloads registered on the website. Printed copies are available at the IAI's new office in Panama and will be shared at COP33.

47. Additionally, the Directorate announced the launch of a new biodiversity compendium in collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Latinoamérica 21. Scientists contributing to this initiative received specialized training in science communication, and several have already begun publishing their work in regional newspapers, achieving notable visibility as two initial authors had their articles republished twelve times. This biodiversity compendium will also be available in multiple languages and formats.
48. In terms of digital outreach, IAI's new website, featuring an updated logo, is nearing completion. With a planned migration to a more robust server, the website's improved indexing capacity will enhance the visibility of IAI-funded publications, supporting the IAI's mission to make scientific resources easily accessible to the global research community.
49. The Directorate also introduced two new open courses: Scientific Diplomacy and Global Environmental Change in the Americas, developed by the Science Diplomacy Center, and Foundations of Transdisciplinary Research on Global Environmental Change in Latin America and the Caribbean, created by the IAI Science Program. These courses, currently in the final stages of testing, will soon be available at no cost, with options for obtaining badges for individual modules and a certificate of approval for the entire curriculum.
50. To further respond to community needs, the Directorate is developing a course on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in partnership with NASA. This course will introduce foundational concepts in GIS, satellite imagery analysis, and practical applications using Google Earth Engine. It is tailored to meet the interests of IAI's community members, as identified through a recent survey, and will be accessible on IAI's virtual campus.
51. In an effort to strengthen relations with Parties, the Directorate has launched a series of interviews with national focal points. This initiative aims to better understand focal points' areas of expertise, their current engagement with the IAI, and ways to enhance their roles in representing their countries. The Directorate emphasized its dedication to these initiatives and its commitment to fostering strong collaboration across the scientific and educational communities throughout the Americas.

d. Other activities

The Executive Director provided an overview of other activities of the Directorate:

52. She shared insights from the organizational development efforts, including retreats and leadership training for IAI staff, with the support of the organization *Inclusive Innovation*, an international team with expertise in organizational facilitation and creative processes, to enhance internal coordination, leadership, management, and communication. This initiative aims to enhance the IAI's internal coordination, management, and strategic

planning. Since January, the Directorate participated in three virtual retreats and one in-person retreat in Uruguay, allowing the members of the Directorate to refine roles, clarify responsibilities, and translate its strategic plan into operational actions.

53. With the strategic plan for the next five years adopted in May, the IAI has implemented new monitoring tools to evaluate progress. These tools, integrated within Microsoft platforms, aim to improve tracking and will be presented in the annual report at the next CoP-33.
54. In response to a proposal from CR2 (Chile), IAI is organizing a first meeting for its 12 Associates to enhance regional cooperation across the network of Associates. This network is crucial for aligning the IAI's scientific agenda with national policies.
55. As host of the Belmont Forum, IAI has aligned its scientific agenda with transdisciplinary global environmental change initiatives. It was highlighted the recent launch of a tropical forests funding call, and preparations are underway for a new Oceans call to be launched at the UN Ocean Conference in France in June 2025. Looking forward, the Directorate anticipates a seed grant and training program to accompany the new Ocean CRA, thus building the capacity of IAI members states to engage in the global funding call.
56. The Executive Director informed that preparations were underway for IAI's participation in the SRI (Sustainability Research & Innovation) Congress in Chicago, June 2025 and invited Parties to attend. This event, organized by the University of Illinois, Future Earth, and Belmont Forum, will focus on sustainability solutions. Scholarships will be available for early-career researchers, low-income country representatives, and indigenous community members.
57. The Executive Director announced progress on a proposal with the Andean Development Corporation (CAF) focused on regional integrated sargassum management, with participation from Dominican Republic, Colombia, Panama, Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados. Additionally, in early October 2024, IAI co-hosted a hybrid hurricane resilience symposium in Kingstown, Jamaica, in partnership with the University of the West Indies, an IAI Associate, and the World Meteorological Organization.
58. The Directorate attended the recent CBD COP16 in Cali, collaborating with Colombia's IDEAM and Instituto Humboldt to represent IAI members' biodiversity priorities. Side events were held with Peru, Brazil and Colombia. She emphasized the importance of aligning biodiversity, climate change, and desertification agendas, the three Rio conventions, for the upcoming UNFCCC CoP-30 in Brazil.
59. She concluded by noting that El Salvador's interest in becoming an IAI member state will be discussed at CoP-33, with hopes of expanding collaboration within Central America and the Caribbean.
60. Comments by participants underscored the commitment to integrating biodiversity and climate change actions and reflected participants' efforts to promote inclusive engagement in scientific diplomacy and environmental governance.

61. Humboldt Institute highlighted the collaborative achievements at the CBD CoP, including the creation of a permanent advisory body for Indigenous Peoples and Humboldt Institute's new role as a regional capacity building hub to support the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. She emphasized the institute's commitment to strengthening synergy with the IAI across the region.
62. IDEAM reflected on the success of Colombia's hosting efforts for the CBD CoP and underscored the importance of adapting scientific knowledge for various audiences, including decision-makers and the public. She mentioned success in community engagement and effective science communication during the event.
63. Chile inquired about discussions on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) at the CBD CoP, emphasizing the need for alignment between biodiversity and climate agendas, especially as countries prepare to update their NDCs in alignment with the Paris Agreement. The Executive Director responded by affirming ongoing efforts to strengthen cross-convention collaboration and ensure that the perspectives and priorities of IAI Parties are represented in international forums, particularly in preparation for UNFCCC CoP-30 in Brazil.

e. Update on the Establishment of the IPAC

64. The Directorate provided an update on the progress toward establishing an Indigenous Peoples' Advisory Committee, a mandate from the last CoP-32. This committee will advise the Conference of the Parties on scientific agenda items, the strategic plan, the implementation of IAI's gender, equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) policy, and the annual IAI program.
65. The initial committee will consist of five indigenous experts from IAI member countries, chosen based on expertise in global environmental change, either through academic or community leadership backgrounds. Membership will consider diversity across gender, ethnicity, and geographic representation, and appointments will include youth and women representatives. Members will engage as experts and contribute perspectives grounded in traditional knowledge systems, working alongside the SAC and SPAC.
66. The Directorate indicated that a notification would be sent to invite nominations from Parties, Associates, and indigenous organizations. They announced plans to finalize member selection by early 2025 to allow new committee members to participate in the CoP-33 in Paraguay. This inaugural committee will later define its own procedures and structure, following the model used to establish the SPAC.
67. The Executive Director, thanked the EDI Committee for its careful and thoughtful process, noting that indigenous leaders from Canada, Guatemala, Panama, and Ecuador had been consulted to ensure the committee's structure aligns with multilateral standards and respects indigenous governance practices.

Agenda item 6: Perspectives from Parties on information dissemination

68. The IAI Directorate initiated a survey directed at focal points to gather insights on improving information dissemination to IAI Parties. The Strategic Advisor emphasized the survey's purpose: to identify the types of information most needed by Parties, facilitating better communication and additional resources where required. The survey, conducted in real-time during the meeting, aimed to refine the dissemination approach leading up to the CoP and beyond, ensuring relevance and addressing any unmet informational needs.
69. The Directorate encouraged focal points to complete the survey promptly, allowing for immediate feedback to inform ongoing improvements in IAI's communication and support for Parties.

Agenda item 7: Future meetings and venues: 33rd meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP-33) and 59th Executive Council (EC-59)

70. The Chair reminded attendees that the 33rd Conference of the Parties (CoP-33) and the 59th meeting of the Executive Council would be hosted by Paraguay in late May 2025. She then invited Paraguay to provide an update on the meetings held with the Directorate in preparation for CoP-33.
71. Paraguay confirmed that the 59th Executive Council meeting (EC-59) will take place on May 28, 2025, followed by CoP-33 on May 29 and 30, 2025. He emphasized Paraguay's intention to leverage the presence of delegates and key stakeholders to align the IAI CoP with the preparation efforts for the upcoming UNFCCC CoP-30, which will be held in Belém, Brazil.
72. The Executive Director expressed appreciation for Paraguay's generosity in hosting these meetings, noting the opportunity to mobilize the agenda collaboratively and strengthen diplomatic science initiatives along the pathway from the CBD COP16 in Cali, Colombia, to the UNFCCC COP30 in Belém, Brazil. She highlighted that with the headquarters of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) based in Asunción, plans are underway to coordinate side events for Parties during CoP-33. Additionally, she mentioned the intention to host a science diplomacy event either immediately before or after CoP-33 to further advance collaborative efforts.
73. The Chair also expressed her gratitude to Paraguay for their support and commitment.

Agenda item 8: Closing remarks

74. The Chair closed the meeting by noting the progress of the IAI and the great work and strong commitment of the Directorate, SAC, SPAC, and focal points. The Chair expressed gratitude for the dedication of all participants and emphasized the importance of continued collaboration across IAI's diverse initiatives.
75. The meeting was closed at 11:45 am Panama time on 6 November 2024.