

Joint Communiqué for the Human Frontier Science Program May 20, 1997

1. Representatives of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and the Commission of the European Communities, constituting the Management Supporting Parties (MSPs) for the Human Frontier Science Program (HFSP), met on May 20, 1997 in Washington D.C. to review the progress made so far and discuss the future of the HFSP after the end of the first full-fledged implementation phase (1992-1997).

2. The HFSP is a multilateral science program that aims to contribute to advancement of the frontiers of human knowledge by promoting, through international cooperation, basic research focused on the elucidation of the complex mechanisms of living organisms, to facilitate maximum use of the MSPs scientific potential, and to allow the fullest possible use of the research results, taking into account bioethical considerations, for the benefit of all mankind.

3. The HFSP was proposed by the government of Japan at the Venice Economic Summit in June 1987. The other participants in the Economic Summit welcomed this initiative. The Program was further developed by international scientific committees composed of eminent scientists and experts from the seven Economic Summit countries and the European Community. Following the recommendations of these committees, intergovernmental meetings were held in June and July 1989 in Tokyo and Berlin respectively, in order to establish a framework for implementation of the HFSP. At an Intergovernmental Conference held in Tokyo in 1992, the representatives of the MSPs recommended the continued support of the Program beyond its initial phase, guided by a communiqué issued at the end of the conference.

4. Following the instructions of the 1992 communiqué, a scientific review of the Program was carried out in 1995 and a major review of all aspects of the Program was conducted and reported in 1996. The conclusions of these two reviews were very positive and emphasized in particular:

- the excellence of the science supported and the peer-review process used
- the uniqueness of the HFSP in promoting international and intercontinental collaboration
- the support of scientists relatively early in their careers
- the efficiency of administration
- the need for the Program to continue and expand.

5. The need for the Program was evidenced by the fact that the number of grant applications doubled between 1990 and 1995, while the number of applications for the Long-Term Fellowships have more than quadrupled.

6. The Proceedings of the 1996 G-7 Summit Meeting (Lyon, France) noted the following: "We applaud the results of the Human Frontier Science Program since its launch in Venice in 1987, and we await with interest the outcome of the Intergovernmental Conference on further progress on the subject in Autumn 1996."

7. At the 1997 Intergovernmental Conference in Washington D.C., the representatives of the MSPs recognized the desirability of continuing the HFSP for a further phase of five years with the following understandings.

8. **Aims of the Program:** The aims, objectives, and mission of the Program will continue to be the provision of a unique and important contribution to basic research of the highest quality, based on international peer-review. The MSPs reaffirmed the value of the Program's emphasis on interdisciplinary science, encouragement of researchers early in their careers who are expected to play an important role in originating creative research, and international, particularly intercontinental, cooperation.

9. **Program activities – Research areas:** MSPs noted that the Program had provided valuable support to frontier basic research on the elucidation of brain functions and of biological functions through molecular level approaches. MSPs noted that these themes continue to be of high priority, and also recommended that the Board of Trustees (BoT), in consultation with the Council of Scientists, review the Program to ensure that it continues to support research activities in which it has a unique contribution to offer.

10. **Program activities – Fellowships and Grants:** MSPs agreed that Program activities in the subject areas will continue to be research grants, long and short-term fellowships, and workshops. Noting that the grants' program was identified by program reviews as the most distinctive feature of the HFSP, MSPs requested that BoT consider appropriate adjustments in the proportions of program support.

11. **New membership:** MSPs noted that the importance of promoting new participant parties for the further development of the international and collaborative nature of the Program. At the 1992 Intergovernmental Conference, MSPs stated that the opportunity to become a MSP is open to all interested and qualified parties and that acceptance of those parties desiring to join the HFSP will be decided by the BoT after deliberation of such factors as the party's scientific capacity in the research areas of the HFSP and the degree of the party's intended support of the Program. At the 1997 Intergovernmental Conference, recognizing that other parties have expressed interest in becoming a MSP, the BoT was requested to formulate criteria to admit a new party based on its scientific capability in research areas and the party's financial support to HFSP. The BoT was also requested to consider and respond to these applications in a timely manner.

12. **Financing:** The HFSP will continue to be supported by contributions from all MSPs. Unconditional financial contributions are preferred, although in-kind contributions, consistent with the guidelines of the HFSP, are also welcome. The MSPs reaffirmed the goals of the 1992 communique towards increased and equitable funding for the HFSP. This increase will serve to support the scientific excellence of the Program based on continual assessment by the Council of Scientists. It will also contribute to progress towards an equal match between the contribution of Japan and the contribution of other MSPs, with an objective to favor grants over fellowships. The MSPs stressed the urgency of moving toward these goals within five years. An example of a way to achieve these desired goals is offered¹

13. **General structure:** The HFSP Organization will continue its legal status as an international, non-governmental, non-profit association during its next phase. The BoT, whose members represent the MSPs, will continue to govern the Program in accordance with the Statutes and By-laws of the HFSP. The government of France, Region Alsace and the city of Strasbourg will maintain the preferential treatment and privileges they have provided the HFSP Organization and its employees. MSPs reaffirmed the important role that BoT plays in administering the Program and strongly encouraged all MSPs to ensure that they were represented on the BoT by representatives with appropriate decision-making authority.

14. **Review of the Program:** The Program will continue to be reviewed by various means, including regular reports. A review of the effectiveness of the Program from the scientific viewpoint will be carried out within five years from the date of the previous scientific review, i.e., by December 2000. A major review of all aspects of the Program will be conducted and reported to the MSPs by the end of March 2001.

¹: One example of a way to achieve the financial goals of the Program is shown below.

Guidelines for HFSP funding	
MSP	Contribution (in thousand US\$)
Japan	37.000
European Commission	3.000
Canada	800
France	2.050
Germany	3.200
Italy	1.550
Switzerland	450
United Kingdom	1.500
USA	10.450
Program Total	60.000

MSPs agreed as a first step and within two years to make the strongest efforts to provide a contribution equal to at least 50% of the figures. [These figures have been calculated for the MSPs other than Japan and the EC on the basis of a GNP standard (reference OECD, average GNP 1993 to 1995 minus 10%)].

15. Next conference: MSPs expressed their desire to hold the next Intergovernmental Conference following the reviews of the Program in 2001 to consider the future of the Program. The MSPs may meet sooner at the request of the BoT.

N.B. Updated for clarity on 3 January 2018 on account of duplication of a footnote