Correspondence

ISSCR upholds right to science

The International Society for Stem Cell Research (ISSCR) guidelines replace the 14-day limit on embryo research with case-by-case review (see go.nature.com/3gf1kw8). Some scientists, ethicists and lawyers advocate keeping the limit (or a substitute). They contend that it avoids ethical and political minefields, boosts public confidence and minimizes confusion (see J. Johnston *et al. Nature* **594**, 495 (2021); R. M. Green *et al. Nature* **594**, 333; 2021). In our view, the 14-day limit fails to uphold the human right to benefit from science.

This right was first recognized in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "everyone has the right freely… to share in scientific advancement and its benefits". According to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, limitations must be "determined by law" and "solely for the purpose of promoting the general welfare in a democratic society".

We maintain that the ISSCR guidelines respect this right: it is to everyone's benefit to increase knowledge, identify the causes of miscarriage and congenital abnormalities and improve infertility treatments (see also A. Boggio *et al. CRISPR J.* **2**, 134–142; 2019). Removal of a time limit ensures greater public debate on the governance of embryo research.

Zubin Master Mayo Clinic, Minnesota, USA.
master.zubin@mayo.edu

Robin Lovell-Badge The Francis Crick Institute, London, UK.

Bartha Knoppers McGill University, Quebec, Canada.

The authors declare competing interests; see go.nature.com/3ekp4yf

Six years as university rector changed how I do genetics

There is a belief in academia that it is difficult, even impossible, to return to research after taking on administrative responsibility. That has not been my experience.

After six years as rector of the University of Rome Tor Vergata — intense years, filled with passion and sacrifice — I returned to my laboratory of medical genetics in late 2019. I went from coordinating an institution of 30,000 students and 2,400 faculty members and staff, with an annual budget of €300 million (US$356 million), and signing contracts with institutions all over the world, to designing experiments, writing grants and publishing numerous papers during the tough first year of the pandemic.

The relationships and alliances made during my years as rector opened my mind. Back at the bench, I found myself more efficient and motivated, more keen to collaborate with scientists from different disciplines and more deft in negotiation with funders. My lab joined the Covid Human Genetic Effort consortium (www.covidhge.com) to work on the bases of SARS-CoV-2 infection. Having overseen so many different research groups made it easier to integrate into a consortium of hundreds.

The administrative experience was a great help, not a hindrance. It taught me to look at the science more broadly. Complex challenges, such as those we face today, require lab heads and bureaucrats to work together to build a more sustainable future that leaves no one behind.

Giuseppe Novelli University of Rome Tor Vergata, Italy.
novelli@med.uniroma2.it

Solar geoengineering research needs formal global debate

It is true that solar radiation modification (SRM) would require effective global governance that currently does not exist (see F. Biermann *Nature* **595**, 30; 2021). It is for precisely this reason that meaningful conversations at the global level are needed on how, if at all, such frameworks could be put in place; if and how research might be governed; and whether or not SRM should be used. Silencing all formal debate piles risk upon risk, in my view.

SRM is not a substitute for mitigation. At best, it could supplement those efforts while temporarily cooling the planet — and possibly staving off potential planetary tipping points. The longer we take to radically slash emissions, the greater the possibility that the world might need to consider SRM. Of course, SRM would also generate new risks. There are no risk-free options. We need to weigh the risks of our present paths with those from the potential use of SRM.

The world needs a forum — such as the United Nations — where all voices and views can be expressed. There, the world should debate, and then it could decide on a moratorium on further research, or it could do the opposite. We need these conversations now.

The longer we delay, the greater the risk of hasty, ungoverned actions or decisions.

Janos Pasztor Carnegie Climate Governance Initiative, Geneva, Switzerland.
jpasztor@c2g2.net

The author declares competing interests; see go.nature.com/3wr3yp7

Andes foothills protected by carbon-offset fund

At its creation in 2008, the United Nations REDD ('reducing emissions from degradation and deforestation') programme was hailed as a way to finance conservation with tools such as carbon offsets. Thirteen years on, little of that promise has been realized. A REDD transaction signed in March for the Cordillera Azul National Park, in the foothills of the Andes in Peru, offers hope.

The deal will support the conservation in perpetuity of the 13,500-square-kilometre park and its rich and pristine biodiversity. A trust fund to cover all expenses is being set up by the non-governmental organization CIMA Cordillera Azul, which manages the park, and the Peruvian Service for Natural Protected Areas.

Investments in sustainable livelihoods will strengthen efforts to curb and reverse deforestation in the 23,000-km^2 buffer zone around the park — home to more than 300,000 people. Notably, they will boost development of sustainable products from forest restoration and agroforestry. For example, CIMA has built a cacao-processing plant to promote cacao agroforestry as an alternative to land use that relies on deforestation.

To our knowledge, this is the first REDD transaction to ensure that all conservation costs for a national park of this size are financed by private-sector carbon-credit sales, with minimal transaction costs. Similar deals around the globe could help to catalyse the carbon market.

Evert Thomas CIMA Cordillera Azul, Lima, Peru
evert.thomas@gmail.com
*On behalf of 4 correspondents; see go.nature.com/3hewbkf