

## **15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the UN Inter-Agency Committee on Bioethics (UNIACB) in Geneva, Switzerland**

The UN Inter-Agency Committee on Bioethics (UNIACB) was established in 2003 in order to facilitate the cooperation of UN and other international organizations active in the area of bioethics. The UNIACB has been meeting on an annual basis, with UNESCO ensuring the function as Permanent Secretariat.

The 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the UNIACB was hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 2-3 May 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland. The following organizations were represented:

Members	World Health Organization (WHO); United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); World Trade Organization (WTO); Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
Associate Members	Council of Europe (CoE); European Commission (EC); International Centre for the Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB)
Observers	World Medical Association (WMA); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

The meeting was opened by Dr Ties Boerma, Director of the Department of Information, Evidence and Research at WHO.

After the approval of the report of the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting held in Trieste, Italy in March 2015, participants shared information on their activities in bioethics. Participants spoke to their reports, or provided an update on their activities and engaged in discussion with the Committee.

Participants discussed mechanisms for improving communications and sharing information between meetings. The meeting had a fruitful discussion about the benefits and shortcomings of the current systems in place, and discussed several new communications procedures amongst participants, such as, an institutional UNIABC Secretariat email address, a UNIACB email list, quarterly email updates from the Secretariat, or a six-monthly WebEx call.

Participants discussed cooperation in strengthening National Ethics/Bioethics Committees (NECs/NBCs) and regional opportunities for capacity building. Participants reaffirmed their commitment to closer collaboration.

Participants shared new and emerging priorities from their institutions. In particular, the meeting discussed the topics of: vulnerability in respect of research involving children; big data and children; phylogenetics and HIV, the 2016 High Level Meeting on Ending AIDS, and revision of the guidance on ethical consideration in biomedical HIV prevention trials; the new mandate of the European Commission's EGE; bioethics and the SDGs; antimicrobial resistance; and ageing.

WHO presented on the topic of epidemics and emergencies, with a special focus on Zika, reporting on some of the challenges faced in the Ebola and Zika crises. WHO also provided a report on their soon to be released guidance document for the management of outbreak outbreaks, and the Committee discussed some of the resulting issues.

The next meeting is scheduled to take place in spring 2017.

## **Action points:**

### **Following-up questions arising from discussion**

- WMA is developing a *Declaration on Ethical Considerations regarding Health Databases and Biobanks*. WMA to provide details of liaison at WHO to WHO colleagues.
- UNAIDS to provide more information on the existing data management policy within the Organization.
- ICGEB to provide details of Zika project to WHO in view of potential collaboration between ICGEB and WHO.
- *WHO ethical and safety recommendations for researching, documenting and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies* was first published in 2007. WHO will report back if any updates are planned.
- FAO will share experiences on its involvement with insecticide use and public health in Zika response.
- WHO will share information on prospective in-country/regional workshops on ethics of disasters and epidemics.
- UNICEF will provide links for the UNICEF training e-module.
- UNICEF will circulate data protection legislation map.
- Participants to provide the names of any suitable researchers on vulnerability to UNICEF.

### **Identification of gaps in capacity**

- Interested parties to forward queries on gaps in research review capacity relating to children to UNICEF.

### **Website and communications**

- Members and Associate Members to provide to the Secretariat: updated contact information; links to activities and resources; and suggestions for themes under which to group links on website, by 23 May.