



Opening remarks at INGSA2018 Tokyo

Sir Peter Gluckman
Chair, INGSA

I too would add my welcome and thank our Japanese colleagues for all they have done to make this meeting a success. I particularly acknowledge the gracious remarks of Prof Kishi whom I have enjoyed working with over recent years, President Tanaka, President Hamaguchi and Vice President Takeuchi. I also want to acknowledge Prof Arimoto and Satoro Ohtake for all their assistance.

It is hard to believe INGSA is only 4 years old. In that time we have delivered over 20 workshops involving perhaps 1400 attendees with partners in Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, Central America, South America, Asia and the Pacific. We have over 5000 academics, policy professionals, decision-makers and diplomats from over 80 countries engaged. We have formal partnership with UNESCO; are engaged with UNDP and others on SDG work; we have produced an important report on the policy and research implications of the digital transformation on human wellbeing for the OECD¹; and we have launched very effective chapters in Africa, Latin America, Asia and soon North America and Europe. A division for science for international relations and diplomacy was launched yesterday.

This is the third biennial meeting of INGSA, the previous ones having been in Auckland and Brussels. This time, we have limited attendance to encourage easier networking, and I am delighted with the mix of attendees: both senior and emerging, well balanced between the Global South and the North. The sessions at this meeting cover the broad range of contemporary issues at the science-policy interface. Satellite meetings include workshops on parliamentary science advice, science diplomacy, urban science advice, capacity building with the Global Young Academy, and a meeting with Sense about Science on the role of data in policy making.

But while this biennial INGSA conference is important, it is our intercessional activities that are even more important: workshops, training, report generation, research, partnerships.

INGSA is constitutionally part of the International Science Council, newly fomed by the merger of ICSU and ISSC. Tomorrow, we will hear from ISC president Daya Reddy, who will address the place of INGSA within the the ISC's strategic plan.

So if we look at the landscape of the interface between science and policy there is good news, sad news and bad news. The good news is reflected in the many countries and organisations that have partnered with us to build both individual and institutional capacities and the interface. The sad news is how few countries have a holistic and multivalent science advisory ecosystem, and there

¹ <https://www.ingsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/INGSA-Digital-Wellbeing-Sept18.pdf>

remain deficits both within the policy community and the science community that complicate and muddy the interface. The bad news is also about the rise in populism, and the associated explosion of fake news, false facts, manipulated information, loss of trust in institutions and experts, and the shortening of the policy cycle that makes the role of robust evidence even more important and more difficult.

This is indeed a complex interface, one that requires distinct skills and knowledge to navigate. It is not simply about academics holding a mirror to the policy community or about policy makers seeking endorsement of positions already determined. It is a complex and sensitive interface that requires understandings of both cultures, and that is critical because there is no single issue affecting social, environmental or economic wellbeing where science cannot play an important role in informing policy development, application and evaluation. Yet science does not make policy – it informs it. We must strive for policy makers to realise that robust evidence can assist them to make better choices between options, for policy making is really about choosing between options that affect different groups of stakeholders in different ways. And thus, policy making and political decision making will always be ultimately a matter of choices driven by many values-based dimensions.

But the issues are evolving. Policy cycles are shorter, and the issues they are expected to address are increasingly complex – the so-called wicked problems. But too often, politicians want evidence to support prior decisions; often the full range of knowledge disciplines are not brought to bear on the problem; data remains poorly used and yet the digital space as we will discuss at this meeting has much to offer; then there is the challenge of too much information that is often conflicting and competing. Brokerage is clearly needed in such a context.

To quote from a recent report from Sitra², a Finnish independent but parliamentary endowed think tank, *“the development of the interaction between knowledge and decision-making is a central strategic competence and governance challenge for the future. Meeting the challenge requires a leap forward in terms of dialogue: a fundamental change in operational culture, at the heart of which is an understanding that knowledge can only be given meaning through interaction”*.

So what can science do? Science provides the grounding for understanding the system, the options and the implications of each. But scientists too must understand how to assist the policy community – bringing forward problems without providing policy and politically acceptable solutions is generally not very helpful. The issues for which policy makers most often need assistance are the very ones for which the science is often incomplete and ambiguous, and increasingly the issues we are grappling with confront societal values which are heavily disputed. Diplomatic skills are needed to navigate this interface, and, importantly, to match supply and demand of policy relevant knowledge. Often the challenge is to get the policy maker to understand the value and need for evidence. These are matters for the next two days.

A main theme of this meeting is transformation – societal transformation – and in particular the types of transformation needed to realise the Sustainable Development Goals. INGSA, working with ICSU, and now ISC, has been very active in thinking through some of the issues and in particular how to shift governments from a somewhat cynical repackaging of what they already are doing as being their commitment to the 2030 Agenda, to a situation where the SDGs do exert

² <https://www.sitra.fi/en/publications/knowledge-decision-making-finland-towards-greater-dialogue/>

some real policy pull. Tomorrow we will expand on what INGSA is doing and its partnerships in this regard.

But there has been a concerning step backwards. While the previous UN Secretary-General established a scientific advisory board, it was not yet renewed under the current SG's tenure. Given that every global challenge has a scientific dimension, the lack of any structure to integrate and provide knowledge into the global policy community is a real concern. It is something we continue to raise awareness about.

There are many other topics on the agenda, ranging from science diplomacy, to the positioning of evidence derived from the private sector, to issues of how big data will impact on the policy process. We have an extraordinary group of speakers, panellists and delegates, including the first round of INGSA Research Associates, awarded earlier this year, and the executive members of each regional chapter. Please use the chance to network, to explore some very important but complex issues, and to support INGSA's further development.

Tomorrow we will describe some of the important developments and activities INGSA is engaged in or will be over the next 2-3 years, and we look forward to your active engagement. Once again I thank our Japanese hosts and look forward to some vibrant and insightful discussions.