

Presentation of the 6th meeting of the World Congress for Freedom of Scientific Research

Tentative venue, Addis Abeba, 2020

The interaction between science and the decision-making process has always been at the center of the five meetings of the **World Congress for Freedom of Scientific Research** organized since 2004 by the **Associazione Luca Coscioni**. The final declaration of the 5th session held at the European Parliament in Brussels in April 2018 states that *“Participants believe that an international committee to promote ‘Science for Democracy’ should be promoted - and remain available to participate in their different capacities and in any way deemed necessary - looking forward to the next World Congress meeting hoping that its sixth session can take place in a developing country that is struggling to establish or reinforce its democratic institutions, the Rule of Law and that is promoting and protecting scientific progress”*.

Science for Democracy is now an international platform that promotes the **Rule of Law** through the affirmation of the “right to science”, the adoption of **evidence-based decisions, and the promotion of public debates to foster human development and societal welfare**. Science for Democracy aims to **consolidate democracy as the institutional framework which can advance the right of and to science globally**.

Issues central to the activities of Science for Democracy are the **environment** and its **various ecosystems, human freedom, health and quality of life**. The organization is headed by two former Italian MPs, Marco Cappato and Marco Perduca who, together with the Associazione Luca Coscioni, are working to convene the future meetings of the World Congress.

A summary of Science for Democracy’s activities and events can be found **on its website**: these range from academic conferences, to political gathering and actions on the field, such as snacks with gene-edited food. Themes like **genome editing on humans and plants, patients rights, research on embryonic stem cells, reproductive rights, medical use and research on controlled narcotics, information technology and Artificial Intelligence** are debated at the Congresses within the framework of the so-called “**right to science**”.

The “right to science” is a right codified in dozens of national, regional and International Human Rights Instruments and includes the right for scientists to conduct research as much as the right for people to benefit from its results.

Participants in the World Congress include **representatives from national executive and legislative bodies, relevant regional organizations and UN Agencies and Offices, academics and research institutes, media, civil society and non-governmental organizations with a particular focus on those that work on patients rights.**

WHY ETHIOPIA

The recent political, social and economic developments in **Ethiopia** suggest that the country has decided to invest in consolidating its position as a leader to advance peace and stability in the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia’s national progress, as well as the regional dynamics set in motion to foster peace and reconciliation with Eritrea, could significantly benefit from an expanded international attention beyond the usual fields of bilateral or multilateral relations to include the affirmation of the human right to science, which promotes inclusion and international cooperation on the basis of facts.

In addition to the favorable general political situation, in his inauguration speech Prime Minister **Abiy Ahmed** called on exiled Ethiopians to return home. "*We will welcome you home,*" he said, "*the coming season in Ethiopia is a season of peace and reconciliation*" and highlighted improving the quality of education as one of this top objectives.

At the end of October 2018 the Federal Parliamentary Assembly unanimously elected **Sahle-Work Zewde**, a former diplomat, as Head of State - the first woman to hold that post.

The appointment of a female head of state, as recently [tweeted](#) by **Fitsum Arega**, Ethiopian Ambassador to the United States "*in a patriarchal society such as Ethiopia, not only sets the standard for the future but also normalises women as decision-makers in public life*".

Last, but not least, the Director-General of the World Health Organization is former Ethiopian diplomat **Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**, who has been outspoken on the issue of reproductive health and has voiced his concerns on the status of women in society all over the world.

Investing on Science, both in terms of scientific culture and in strengthening some university departments that have become central in the education of an entire continent, can make research and development structural allies in setting the standard for the future of a country that wants to open a new page in which dialog, inclusion and reconciliation are central to the public debate and the decision-making process.

Organizing the 6th session of the World Congress in Addis Ababa will also allow the involvement of the **African Union** (which could provide the venue for the event), to identify key recommendations for policy-makers to address national, regional and international institutions responsible for adopting regulations on science-related issues and to foster scientific culture and its necessary economic and financial support.

The preparation of the event will allow the organization of several thematic meetings to address national issues. This will be done by reaching out to national stakeholders to prepare for the follow up of the African focus of the event starting, from Ethiopia.

Among the key themes to be included on the agenda of the Congress: global warming, information technology, Artificial Intelligence, vegetal biotechnologies, and, of course women both concerning their reproductive rights and their underrepresentation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Medicine (STEM) fields. If all over the world women account for less than a third of those employed in scientific research and development, the situation presents some encouraging aspects in developing countries. Even so, on a global scale, women are less likely than men to enter a STEM field but more likely to leave. Furthermore, female underrepresentation in clinical trials reduces women's opportunities to access effective treatments. As a result, women and girls are unable to enjoy the same opportunities than men when it comes to STEM fields.

Past [meetings of the World Congress](#) have seen the participation of Nobel Laureates, European Commissioners for research and health, national ministers and legislators as well as representatives from civil society organizations and the media; the time is now ripe to finally engage the global

scientific community with and in Africa to promote and consolidate, among other things, opportunities to pursue the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development set by the United Nations.

For your reference, below you can find the programme of the 5th meeting of the World Congress held at the European Parliament in Brussels:

Wednesday, 11 April

14:00 – 17:00: “Scientific method and liberal-democracy”: Political issues on the top of the agenda: public health, artificial intelligence, migration, global warming, need policies based on facts that should be evaluated upon results. Politicians should engage scientist and patients, while scientists should interact with society and decision-makers.

Chair: **Marco CAPPATO, Treasurer, ALC, former MEP**

Brando BENIFEI, MEP

Committees on employment and social affairs and security; member of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats and of Italy’s Democratic Party, he has been the chair of European affairs for the Young Democrats and Vice-President of ECOSY (youth organisation of PES) for years.

Michele DE LUCA, Center for Regenerative Medicine University of Modena, co-President ALC

Researcher in the field of epithelial stem cells, is director of the Center for Regenerative Medicine “Stefano Ferrari” of the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia. Among his major scientific discoveries, last in order of time, the reconstruction of the skin of a “Butterfly baby” by combining stem cells and gene therapy.

Mikel MANCISIDOR, vice-Chair of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, “The Human Right to Science in the International Law of Human Rights and in the UN

Member of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Director of the UNESCO Center in the Basque country from 2004 to 2014. Adjunct professor at American University in Washington DC, and visiting professor at the University of Deusto.

Giulia DEL BRENNA, Deputy Head of Cabinet, on behalf of EU Commissioner Carlos MOEDAS, Research, Science and Innovation

Deputy Head, Cabinet of EU Commissioner Moedas for Research, Science and Innovation. Official of the Commission since 1996. She has been Assistant to the Director General of DG Enterprise and Industry, Head of the Pharmaceutical, Food and Biotechnology industries Unit, and Advisor for Administration and Public Health issues in the Task Force for Greece.

Tracey BROWN, Director, Sense about Science

Director of Sense about Science since 2002. In 2010, the Times named Tracey as one of the 10 most influential figures in science policy in Britain, in 2014 she was recognised by the Science Council for her work on evidence-based policy making. In June 2017 Tracey was made an OBE (Order of the British Empire), for services to science.

Jessica WYNDHAM, Director, AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program, “Right to Science”

Director of the Program for Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, which aims to promote and facilitate the responsible practice and science at the service of society. Previously she was a university professor and legal adviser of Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights.

Deborah LIPSTADT, Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish History and Holocaust Studies at Emory University, Georgia, “Holocaust Denial: A prototype for scientific denialism

Professor of Modern History of Judaism and Holocaust Studies at Emory University in Georgia. Former adviser to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, her activity as a historic focuses mainly on the Holocaust.

Walt ORENSTEIN, former director of the United States National Immunization Program, “The impact of anti-vaccine movements on personal and public health”

Professor of Medicine, Pediatrics and Global Health and Principal Investigator of The Influenza Pathogenesis & Immunology Research Center (IPIRC), one of five national Centers of Excellence for Influenza Research and Surveillance funded by NIH/NIAID. Dr. Orenstein is a consultant with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation with a primary focus on designing and monitoring research projects to assure polio is eradicated and that eradication is maintained.

Guido SILVESTRI, Chief of the Division of Microbiology & Immunology at the Yerkes National Primate Research Center, Professor, “AIDS denialism: the pseudoscience that kills”

Georgia Research Alliance Eminent Scholar in Comparative Pathology, and Professor and Vice-Chair of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at Emory University School of Medicine, where he serves as Chair of the Division of Microbiology & Immunology at the Yerkes National Primate Research Center. Member of the Luca Coscioni Association.

Carl HART, Columbia University, “Science and politics”

Chair of the Department of Psychology and the Dirk Ziff Professor of Psychology (in Psychiatry) at Columbia University. His research seeks to understand complex interactions between drugs of abuse and the neurobiology and environmental factors that mediate human behavior and physiology.

Thursday, 12 April

Introduction: **Filomena GALLO, Secretary, ALC; Marco GENTILI, Co-President, ALC**

9:00 to 12:00: “Human genome editing, embryos and regenerative medicine: Better understanding for Better regulation”

Chair: **Stephen MINGER, Director, SLM Blue Skies; Marisa JACONI, Geneva University**

Andrea BOGGIO, Bryant University, Board ALC, “Research with Embryos”

Associate Professor of Legal Studies at Bryant University, Rhode Island, USA. His research focuses on the legal and ethical issues connected to health, science, and technology and on the relationship between law, capitalism, and the welfare state. Board Member of the Luca Coscioni Association.

Cesare P.R. ROMANO, Loyola Law School, Board ALC

Professor of Law and W. Joseph Ford Fellow at Loyola Law School, Los Angeles. His main fields of activity is international courts and tribunals, and international human rights. Board Member of the Luca Coscioni Association.

Toni CATHOMEN, director Medical Center – University of Freiburg, “Therapeutic Genome Editing with CRISPR-Cas and other programmable gene scissors”

Professor and Director, Institute for Cell and Gene Therapy, University Medical Center Freiburg, Germany. His main research interests are the improvement of genome editing tools (TALENs, CRISPR-Cas9) for safe application in human stem cells, the development of disease models and cell therapies based on induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs), and the translations gene editing for the treatment of HIV and primary immunodeficiencies into the clinic.

Giovanni BUTTARELLI, European Data Protection Supervisor, “Fifth World Congress for Freedom of Scientific research – Speech”

Before joining the European Data Protection Authority, he was Secretary General at the Italian Data Protection Authority from 1997-2009. As a Cassation judge in the Italian judiciary, he has long been involved in many initiatives and committees on data protection and related issues at international level.

Malin PARMAR, Lund University, “Stem cell based therapies for Parkinson’s Disease”

Professor at Lund University, Sweden, she is focusing her work on bringing new cell-based therapies for Parkinson’s disease to the clinic by replacing lost dopamine neurons with new healthy cells. Her work in cellular reprogramming opens up the possibilities of personalized treatments of patients with healthy versions of their own cells.

Pete COFFEY, UCL, London

Director of the London Project to Cure Blindness. His work explores this approach with the object of finding the best conditions for transplantation, identifying events that might compromise transplant efficacy and finding solutions to their deleterious effects, and specifically an assessment of how much visual improvement might be expected from this approach.

Giulio COSSU, Manchester University

Professor of Human Stem Cell Biology at Manchester University, he has a long lasting interest in the field of muscle cell and developmental biology. He discovered the myogenic potential of a bone-marrow derived, circulating progenitor cell, he also identified

a novel population of vessel associated stem cell, the mesoangioblasts that proved effective in the treatment of a mouse and dog models of muscular dystrophy. Member of the Luca Coscioni Association.

Beatriz BECERRA, MEP, ALDE, Spain

Member of the European Parliament, member of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

Emma BONINO, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Italy

Senator, former MP and MEP and Minister of Foreign Affairs. She is a leading member of the Italian Radicals and a founder of the NGO No Peace Without Justice. She has held several positions within international organizations.

Mirella PARACHINI, Gynecologist, Board ALC

Medical Director in the Gynaecology and Obstetrics Department at the San Filippo Neri Hospital of Rome. She has participated in Italy's Women's Liberation Movement (MLD) active to legalize divorce and abortion. She one of the founders of the Luca Coscioni Association.

Rebecca GOMPERTS, MD, MPP, PhD Founder and director Women on Waves, “Can abortion research change the law?”

Doctor, founder and Director of Women on Waves and Women on Web. After graduating she became an abortion doctor and sailed with the Greenpeace ship, Rainbow Warrior. While sailing to South America she encountered many women who suffered greatly due to lack of access to reproductive health services and safe, legal abortions.

Thursday, 12 April

14:00 – 17:30: “Modern agricultural biotechnology calling”

Chair: John BRENNAN, Executive Director, EuropaBio; MEP (tbc); Marco PERDUCA, Board ALC, former Senator

14:00 Welcome, Key Note Speech: “Challenges in evaluating risks in food”

Vytėnis ANDRIUKAITIS, European Commissioner for Health and for Food Safety, “Food risks, science and public opinion”

European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety is a Cardiologist. Former member of the Lithuanian Parliament, was Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health of Lithuania. He is a member of the Social Democratic Party of Lithuania since its reconstitution, in the early nineties.

14:30 “State of play of genome editing and modern agri-biotech” What is genome editing, and why use it in agriculture? What do the scientific institutions say about risks and opportunities, and which steps towards legal certainty?

Janusz BUJNICKI, Professor, Member of the European Commission’s Scientific Advice Mechanism, “New Techniques in Agricultural Biotechnology”

Professor of Biology, and head of a research group at IIMCB in Warsaw and at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland. His research combines bioinformatics, structural biology and synthetic biology. His achievements include the development of methods for computational modeling of protein and RNA 3D structures, discovery and characterization of enzymes involved in RNA metabolism, and engineering of proteins with new functions.

Joachim SCHIEMANN, Professor, on behalf of the European Academies of Science Advisory Council (EASAC), “Genome editing: scientific opportunities, public interests and policy options in the European Union”

Director of the Institute for Biosafety in Plant Biotechnology at the Julius Kuehn Institute in Germany. He coordinates the EU-funded project GRACE (GMO Risk Assessment and Communication of Evidence).

15:00 “The CRISPR era”

Genome editing techniques like CRISPR are opening up new possibilities in many fields including plant breeding. When will and should the innovation reach farmers and consumers?

Rene CUSTERS, VIB – Flemish Institute of Biotechnology, “Precision Breeding”

Regulatory & Responsible Research Manager at the Institute for biotechnology in Flanders, Belgium, he is also part of the Co-Extra work group, coordinating the dialogue with stakeholders from seven countries.

Paul TEMPLE, UK Farmer

Tenant farmer in a family partnership that runs a 312 hectare farm in Driffield, East Yorkshire. He is a former NFU vice-president and former chairman of COPA/COGECA cereals, oilseeds and proteins group in Brussels. Founder of the European Biotech Forum, he was an AHDB cereals and oilseeds sector board member from 2013 to 2015 and currently sits on the National Non Food Crops Centre Board.

Nora ALONSO, CEO of Iden Biotechnology

President and Managing Director at Iden Biotechnology, she has more than 10 years of Executive, Management and Business Development experience in the agrobiotech sector. She is the co-founder of Iden Biotechnology.

Arnaud SCHWARTZ, France Nature Environnement, “New GMOs are nothing more than GMOs made with new genetic modification techniques”

National Secretary of France Environment, he is also a member of the European Economic and Social Committee, representing the transalpine country.

16:15 “Innovation, precaution and democracy: A right to science?” Scientific evidence is one factor in EU decision making, but there are ‘other legitimate factors’. Should a democracy stop unpopular innovation?

Chair: **Roberto DEFEZ, National Council of Research, Italy**

Andrea BOGGIO, Bryant University, Board ALC

Dirk HUDIG, Secretary General, European Risk Forum

Secretary general of the European Risk Forum. Former president of the British Chamber of Commerce, has partnered with the OCSE for which he directed the BLAC Environment Committee. He was also secretary general of the Union of industrial and employers confederations of Europe.

David ZARUK

The risk monger, “Case Study: “Natural Nathalie””: Adjunct professor at Université Saint-Louis Brussel and KUL Brussel (Odisee), where he lectures on Risk Communications, EU Lobbying, Corporate Communications and PR. Active in public affairs on chemical issues since 1995 at Solvay, Cefic & Burson-Marsteller. He has served as expert adviser on risk policy communications to several EU bodies.

José Miguel MULET, Author, Professor of Biotechnology, Universidad Politécnica de Valencia

Scientist active in the field of chemistry and molecular biology. Biotechnology teacher at the Polytechnic University of Valencia, he is also part of the Institute for Plant Molecular and Cell Biology, science communicator. In 2015, he won the Tesla Award for communication.

Friday, 13 April

9:00 to 11.30: “Research on psychotropic substances: knowledge vs prohibition = treatment“

Chair: **Tania RE, UNESCO Chair, Genoa; Marco TRAUB, CEO of Tesct, Bern, Switzerland**

Rick DOBLIN, Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, “Scientific Freedom for Psychedelic and Marijuana Research”

Degree in psychology at the New College of Florida and a doctorate in public policy at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. He is the founder of MAPS – Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies.

Tomas PÁLENÍČEK, MD, PhD, National Institute of Mental Health, Czech Republic

Researcher and psychiatrist, since 2001, at the National Institute of Mental Health Czech Republic. His research fields concern in particular MDMA, LSD, mescaline, psilocybin and 2C-B with studies on the neurobiology of psychedelic drugs, entactogens and new light drugs. He is also involved in the study the acute effects of cannabis on healthy volunteers as well as in the effects of psilocybin on human volunteers.

Raphael MECHOULAM, Hebrew University of Jerusalem | HUJI · Institute for Drug Research

Biologist and chemist, was professor of chemistry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He is best known for his work (together with Y. Gaoni) in the isolation, structure elucidation and total synthesis of Δ^9 -tetrahydrocannabinol, the main active principle of cannabis and for the isolation and the identification of the endogenous cannabinoids anandamide from the brain and 2-arachidonoyl glycerol (2-AG) from peripheral organs together with his students, postdocs and collaborators.

Ben SESSA, Psychiatrist, co-founder of the Breaking Convention, “Psychedelics, MDMA, Trauma and Addictions: Bold Steps Forward for the Future of Psychiatry”

Psychiatrist and researcher in the field of psychopharmacology with psychedelic drugs. The scope of his studies is the research for a treatment for mental disorders with MDMA. He is also co-founder of the Breaking Convention.

Carl HART, Chair of the Department of Psychology, Columbia University, “Bias against marijuana”

Amanda FEILDING, Beckley Foundation, London, “Why Science Needs Psychedelics: A Paradigm Shift for Psychiatry”

Drug policy reformer, in 1998 she founded the Beckley Foundation, a charitable trust that promotes a rational, evidence-based approach to global drug policies. The central aim of her research is to investigate new avenues of treatment for such mental illnesses as depression, anxiety and addiction, as well as to explore methods of enhancing well-being and creativity.

11.30 to 13:00: “Conclusions: initiatives for the right to science”

Chair: **Marco CAPPATO and Marco PERDUCA**

Gilberto CORBELLINI, National Council of Research, Italy, “Scientific research, yesterday, today and tomorrow”

Director of the Department of Social and Human Sciences, cultural heritage of the National Research Council. Former member of the National Bioethics Committee and co President of Luca Coscioni Association, he is Professor of History of Medicine and Bioethics at the University La Sapienza of Rome. He directed the magazine “Darwin” and is a member of Luca Coscioni Association.

Sandro GOZI, Under-Secretary to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Italy

Member of the Italian Democratic Party. He has been member of the Italian Parliament during the XV, XVI and XVII terms. Member of the Luca Coscioni Association.

Benedetto DELLA VEDOVA, Under-secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Italy

Former MP and MEP and a member of the Luca Coscioni Association.