**Enhancing the right to science: A roundtable on emerging trends and issues**

Side-event at Social Forum, 2023

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While science is seen as indispensable for addressing current and future societal challenges, its role is more debated than ever in polarized, politicized and often partial terms. Many critics focus on the inconsistent articulation of science processes with human rights considerations. The right to science encompasses different complementary dimensions from access to scientific knowledge and the applications of scientific progress to protection against harm deriving from scientific and technological advancements and protection of the autonomy and freedom of scientific researchers. Hence, the right to science through its different components has the potential of improving the enjoyment of many other rights and providing adequate responses to key sustainability challenges of our times - from climate change and biodiversity loss to global health crises and pandemics. In that sense, the right to science is also critical in accelerating progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are underpinned by scientific knowledge derived from the natural and social sciences.

However, taking full advantage of this right will require shedding further light into aspects that remain underdeveloped and elaborating guidance to address situations of opposing claims and considerations. The global COVID-19 pandemic, for example, has revealed persisting challenges in vaccine distribution but also in the application of intellectual property regimes exacerbating inequalities across and within countries. The deficit in scientific culture coupled with the digitally-enabled proliferation of false information have eroded trust in science. Scientists themselves are under attack as is their practice.

This side event presents research building on the momentum created by recent normative developments such as the UNESCO 2017 Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers. It also draws on an increasing interest and literature over recent years regarding the right to science including the outcomes of recent experts’ conversations such as the [Geneva Human Rights Dialogue on the Right to Science (2022).](https://www.unesco.ch/francais-right-to-science-summary-report-and-video-of-the-second-geneva-human-rights-dialogue/) Participants will include authors of a Special Issue of Frontiers in Sociology dedicated to the topic of enhancing the right to science.

Following an introduction (10 minutes), the roundtable and debate will involve short “opinion pitches” from participants (25 minutes) followed by a roundtable discussion (20 minutes) and an open debate minutes with the audience (20 minutes). The side-event is expected to last 1 hour and 15 minutes.