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**Fostering Cultural Rights: Navigating the Intersection of Science and Human Rights in the United States**

**About Us**

Axana Soltan is a Human-Rights Lawyer. She has received her law degree from The George Washington University School of Law, where she was selected as a GW Law Merit-Based Scholar. She has received her Doctor of Law (J.D.) with the highest distinction from the University of the District of Columbia School of Law. Previously, Axana has been named as one of the contenders for *USA Youth Observer 2019*, one of the finalists for *Most Outstanding Youth Delegate*, and selected as one of the finalists for *WFUNA Young Leader of the Year 2021*. Under President Obama’s Administration, her organization was selected as a certifiable foundation for the White House Presidential Service Award. Axana has also received the U.S. Congressional Recognition from U.S. Senator Mark Warner for demonstrating exemplary leadership, professional achievements, and community service in her state.

**INTRODUCTION:**

In the intricate tapestry of human rights, the right to access and participate in scientific progress emerges as a vital thread, weaving together the aspirations for knowledge, inclusivity, and societal well-being. Ms. Alexandra Xanthaki, the United Nations Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, embarks on a compelling exploration of this crucial intersection, set to unfold in her forthcoming report to the Human Rights Council in March 2024. Building upon the groundwork laid in prior mandates and guided by the comprehensive insights provided by the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, Ms. Alexander’s inquiry seeks to anchor discussions surrounding science within a profound human rights framework.

**General Definitions:**

1. **Defining Science and Scientific Diversity:** In the United States, the definition of science aligns with UNESCO's framework, encompassing a broad spectrum of disciplines. Scientific diversity is understood as the inclusion of various perspectives, methodologies, and knowledge systems that contribute to the richness of scientific inquiry.
2. **Public and/or Common Good:** Science is generally considered a public good in the United States, emphasizing its communal benefits. This implies a commitment to setting priorities for research that serve the common welfare and safeguarding the scientific enterprise from undue influence, ensuring unbiased pursuit of knowledge.
3. **Right to Benefit and Protection Against Harm:** The right to benefit from scientific progress in the U.S. implicitly includes protection against anticipated harm. Anticipation mechanisms often involve rigorous ethical review processes, and in the event of harm, legal avenues, compensation, and rehabilitative measures are pursued.

Main Obstacles to Access and Participation:

1. **Obstacles to Access and Participation:** Key obstacles to ensuring the right to access scientific knowledge in the U.S. include disparities in educational resources and opportunities. An example is the urban-rural divide, where access to advanced scientific education may be limited in certain regions.

Adoption of Specific Measures:

1. **Scientific Freedom:** Scientific freedom is safeguarded in the U.S. through institutional autonomy and legal frameworks protecting researchers from interference. Challenges include ensuring independence from political and commercial interests, with ongoing efforts to maintain the integrity of scientific inquiry.
2. **Measures for Scientific Education, Information, and Journalism:** The U.S. has implemented measures to ensure scientific education for all, including adult education, and disseminates accurate scientific information widely. Challenges include countering misinformation. Science journalism is supported, but challenges persist due to commercial pressures and digital misinformation.

Connecting Science and Policy-Making:

1. **Aligning Policies with Scientific Evidence:** The U.S. follows the principle of aligning policies with the best scientific evidence available, employing rigorous review procedures. In cases of scientific dissensus, a transparent and inclusive approach is adopted to incorporate diverse perspectives.
2. **Science Policy Interface Platforms:** The U.S. has established science policy interface platforms, ensuring scientific input in decision-making. Challenges involve striking a balance between scientific input and broader societal considerations. These platforms are inclusive, engaging experts and stakeholders.

Participation in Science:

1. **Right to Participate and Addressing Inequalities:** The U.S. emphasizes the right of every person to participate in scientific progress. Challenges include ensuring representativeness and addressing inequalities, with ongoing efforts to enhance diversity in scientific engagement.
2. **Citizen Science:** 'Citizen science' is recognized in the U.S., emphasizing public participation in research. Measures support this through open access to information and data. Challenges include ensuring the credibility of contributions and fostering widespread engagement.
3. **Indigenous and Alternative Sciences:** The U.S. acknowledges indigenous and alternative sciences, fostering dialogue between diverse knowledge systems. In policy decision-making, efforts are made to include multiple perspectives, recognizing the intrinsic value of various forms of knowledge.
4. **Limits to Participation:** Limits to the right to participate in scientific progress exist in instances where ethical considerations, privacy concerns, or national security interests prevail. Balancing individual rights with broader societal welfare is an ongoing challenge.

**Conclusion:**

The United States, in navigating the intersection of science and cultural rights, demonstrates a commitment to fostering inclusive access and participation in scientific progress. By addressing these questions, the U.S. strives to align its scientific endeavors with human rights principles, promoting the equitable benefits of scientific advancements for all.