

OECD to Set Rules for International Science

Research ministers have agreed to seek guidelines governing all aspects of international relations in science; Reagan Administration also wants tighter international copyrights

SCIENCE ministers from the 24 member states of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have agreed to try to establish a set of guidelines covering all aspects of international relations in science. The guidelines will include, for example, the extent to which each country should contribute to the world's basic research effort and the conditions under which foreign research workers are permitted to attend scientific meetings.

The agreement was reached at the prompting of the Reagan Administration. It took the form of a request, made at the end of a 2-day meeting in Paris last week, to the OECD secretariat to prepare "proposals for a general framework of common principles for international cooperation in science and technology." It was the first meeting to have been held by the OECD research ministers in 6 years.

At a separate meeting the previous day in Geneva, the United States also proposed that a new initiative should be launched within the framework of GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs) to tighten up on the policing of intellectual property protection, for example by agreeing on common norms covering the way in which intellectual property legislation is written and applied.

Proposals for an international agreement on the principles under which scientific research is conducted within OECD countries were put to the Paris ministerial meeting by William R. Graham, director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy and science adviser to President Reagan. Such an agreement, he told the meeting, could help dispel the "gray clouds of protectionism" growing in various quarters.

"Science and technology have reached such a point of importance in the roles of individual countries that I feel it is time to write down a set of generally held concepts, and make sure that we have agreement on them," Graham said after the meeting. The goal, he said, should be "to collect common principles, assumptions, and beliefs in a precise form which is reasonably compre-

hensive and complete, and could be taken as accepted principles in bilateral discussions."

Graham admitted that Japan was one of the countries he had in mind when he suggested that such principles should include a commitment from each country to make an "equitable contribution" in supporting basic research. But he added that it was important that European countries should also accept the same principles, such as reciprocity in scientific exchanges.

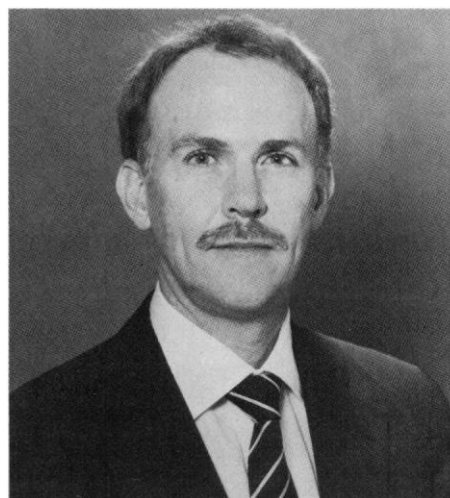
Defending the recent exclusion of foreign diplomats and scientists from last July's meeting on superconductivity in Washington on the grounds that it had been planned primarily as an opportunity for the U.S. Administration to talk to U.S. industry, he said that there were many examples of such government-industry interaction in Europe from which the United States was excluded, such as those projects being financed under the EUREKA scheme of technological cooperation.

"I would like to see U.S. research workers involved in EUREKA, and I would also like to consider the possibility of the U.S. government being involved in EUREKA, if it was invited to take part," Graham said.

Although Graham told the OECD meeting that he felt it would be possible to start drawing up international guidelines immediately, there was reluctance on the part of some other nations represented. Some of the smaller nations with less-developed research bases, for example, expressed the fear that principles they were being asked to endorse might restrict their access to technology-related scientific advances in the larger countries, particularly the United States.

Others argued that the principles the United States chose to apply to its national research efforts, such as leaving most initiatives to the private sector, were inappropriate in countries where substantial government involvement is still required to build up a significant scientific and technological capability.

"The greatest problem we face is whether these smaller countries can get together the capability to be part of the process of technological expansion at all," said Barry Jones,



William Graham. Each country should make an "equitable contribution" to basic research.

the Australian Minister of Science and Small Businesses, who chaired the Paris meeting.

After a lengthy drafting session, a final communique was approved listing three necessary factors for international relations in science and technology: an equitable contribution from all countries in supporting basic research and maintaining up-to-date research facilities; an open system of publication of the results of fundamental research; and an equitable contribution of all countries to the training of the next generation of scientists and engineers.

Firms should enjoy greater access to world markets to ensure the rapid diffusion of new technology. And there should also be an "open circulation of technologies, subject to universal protection of intellectual property rights for firms and organizations which have invested in the development of technology."

The proposals on intellectual property put to the Geneva meeting would represent a significant move beyond current international conventions covering the mutual recognition of patents and copyright, such as those administered by the World Intellectual Property Organization. The United States argued that adopting measures such as the extension of international dispute procedures to the protection of intellectual property would help curb practices estimated to cost the pharmaceutical, electronics, and automobile industries up to \$60 billion a year.

Under the U.S. proposals, retaliation could be taken against any country that failed to comply with the recommendations, under a dispute procedure set up within the framework of the GATT agreements. Such retaliation could include the withdrawal of tariff concessions enjoyed by the offending country. ■ **DAVID DICKSON**