The UN Inter-Agency Committee on Bioethics (UNIACB) was established in 2003 in order to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas, as well as to promote coordination and cooperation amongst UN agencies and other relevant intergovernmental organizations active in the area of bioethics. The UNIACB has been meeting annually since 2003. UNESCO serves as the Permanent Secretariat of the Committee.

The 14th Meeting of the UNIACB was hosted by the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) on 12 to 13 March 2015 in Trieste, Italy. The representatives of UNESCO, WHO, ICGEB, the Council of Europe (CoE) and the European Commission (EC) participated in this meeting as Members and Associate Members of the Committee. Furthermore, the representatives of UNICEF, the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP), and The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) participated as observers.

After the approval of the report of the 13th UNIACB Meeting hosted by the CoE in March 2014, the participating organizations shared information about their current projects, as well as planned activities for the coming year. Participants also took this opportunity to brainstorm possible areas of mutual support to reinforce bioethics and ethics within the respective organizations.

The CoE highlighted its upcoming International Conference on “Emerging Technologies and Human Rights”, which will take place from 4 to 5 May 2015 in Strasbourg, France. The representative of the CoE encouraged participants of the meeting to actively engage in this event, especially since it will provide an important starting point for framing the ethical aspects related to the convergence of emerging technologies, and hence provide opportunities to identify new areas of collaboration among UNIACB members.

Following a very constructive exchange with the representative of UNICEF on its ongoing efforts in the area of ethics, UNIACB members expressed a firm interest to have closer collaboration with UNICEF on a variety of activities, and encouraged UNICEF to consider participating in a more active membership role on the Committee.

Another topic of discussion during this meeting was bioethics capacity-building activities carried out by participating organizations. It was envisaged that closer coordination in this area (such as trainings for national ethics/bioethics committees, etc.) would be useful to create stronger synergies between the different organizations’ interventions. In this regard, participants also discussed the 11th Global Summit of National Ethics Committees, which will be held in Berlin, Germany from 16 to 18 March 2016 (WHO serves as the Secretariat for the Global Summit).

The following topics were identified as discussion items of joint interest at the next meeting of the Committee in 2016:

- Biosecurity
- Bioethical issues related to research involving children

Furthermore, representatives of participating organizations also agreed to share more detailed information about their respective bioethics capacity-building activities targeted at national committees for discussion during the next meeting.

Finally, in order to enhance the visibility of UNIACB, and to highlight the achievements of the Committee in promoting cooperation over the past decade, a dedicated website for UNIACB will be set up, hosted within UNESCO’s web infrastructure, in its role as the Secretariat. Moreover, starting from this meeting, summary reports of annual meetings will be published on this website.