

## International Committee

### Minutes of the 06 November 2023 Meeting Held Online

#### Present:

Benjamin Burton	President	ab@maths.uq.edu.au	Australia	2021-2024
László Jobbágy	Host 2023	laszlo.jobbagy@gmail.com	Hungary	2022-2024
Eslam Wageed	Host 2024	eslamwageed@gmail.com	Egypt	2020-2025
Jhonatan Castro	Host 2025	jhtan@jhtan.com	Bolivia	2022-2026
Makhliyo Muksinova	Host 2026	m.muksinova@it-park.uz	Uzbekistan	2023-2027
Araz Yusubov	Elected	ayusubov@ada.edu.az	Azerbaijan	2021-2024
Eduard Kalinichenko	Elected	eduardische@gmail.com	Latvia	2022-2025
Sandra Schumann	Elected	sandra.schumann@ut.ee	Estonia	2023-2026
Fredrik Niemelä	Elected	fredrik@niemela.se	Sweden	2023-2026
Eljakim Schrijvers	Treasurer	eschrijvers@eljakim.nl	The Netherlands	
J.P. Pretti	Secretary	jpretti@uwaterloo.ca	Canada	

#### Welcome

Ben welcomed everyone and thanked IC members for participating at varying hours of the day. He said Sun Teck is unable to attend because of a teaching conflict.

#### IOI 2024

Ben noted that this meeting was scheduled because of the recent late cancellation of the ICPC 2023 World Finals. He said that while this event is independent of the IOI, it was also scheduled for the same location as IOI with some of the same organizations involved. Ben indicated that he did receive one inquiry about this. He envisioned two outcomes of this meeting:

- Determine how to respond to questions from members of the GA.
- Determine to what extent, if any, contingency planning is needed. If there is no current effect on IOI 2024, should IC develop a Plan B as it did at this stage during the pandemic?

To begin, Eslam was asked about ICPC for which the Arab Academy for Science, Technology & Maritime Transport (AAST) is also involved. He said the Egyptian organizers and ICPC leaders made a joint decision to postpone the event because many teams indicated they were unable to attend due to security concerns. He said that he feels that Sharm El-Sheikh is safe and Alexandria even less at risk, but he understands that some countries and organizations may currently disallow their people to attend an event in Egypt because of the proximity to current conflict in the region.

Ben noted that IOI only has one team per country whereas ICPC often has multiple teams per country. He said every year at IOI, there are a small number of countries that cannot attend. Therefore, he asked if for ICPC, concerns came from only a small number of countries. Eslam said that he believed 18 teams indicated attendance in November 2023 would be problematic, but he did not know what countries they were from.

Ben then asked if there are other risks (financial, logistical, political, etc.) related to IOI 2024 that IC should be aware of. Eslam replied that as noted previously, the financial situation is difficult but will not be a problem. He stated that the same machines will be used by IOI and ICPC, and accommodation and meals are all to be covered by AAST, so they are also not at risk. In terms of security, Eslam said Egypt is not at war and while anything could happen, he feels only one small area near Gaza is facing possible danger. All this said, to be safe, he said he believes we need to start thinking about a hybrid IOI using IOI 2022 hosted by Indonesia as a model. However, Eslam emphasized that this would only be a back-up plan.

Sandra sought more details about the same machines being used at ICPC and IOI. Given this, she wondered if we can be assured that further postponement or even cancellation of ICPC won't cause a problem with the

supply of equipment for IOI. Eslam said this will not be a problem because the machines are already in his possession.

Araz asked for Eslam's personal evaluation of what might happen in terms of Egypt and the current conflict in the region. Eslam said he does not think Egypt will or want to be involved and instead are trying to calm the situation. Of course, he said nobody can know for sure what will happen.

Jhonatan asked if Alexandria is more secure than Sharm El-Sheikh. Eslam said it is. He said concern followed two rockets sent into Sinai by mistake and otherwise life in Egypt is continuing normally. He noted that government advisories are often issued for entire countries even when issues are very localized.

Ben reminded everyone that separate to the rest of this discussion, we have already approved requests for remote participation from Iran and Israel. He wondered if we should reach out to Palestine to see if we can help facilitate their participation in IOI 2024. Eslam replied expressing his opinion that it is too early to reach out but feels we should agree together that Palestine can participate off-site if needed.

Eduard spoke to off-site participation agreeing with Eslam that preparation may be needed immediately. With that in mind, he wondered if it makes sense to continue searching for a remote host. He noted that one of the main reasons for disallowing online participation for remote participants is the burden on hosts, but if plans are needed for this anyways, perhaps that is what should happen for Iran and Israel. Eslam agreed and felt it is likely best for these countries to participate online regardless. He said he is willing to commit to a hybrid IOI right now only to decide later if it is for two or three teams or up to as many as perhaps 30 teams.

Ben asked Fredrik if he thinks ITC has the expertise to support a hybrid IOI. Fredrik replied affirmatively but reminded everyone that it is not easy to run a hybrid competition.

Araz noted that we, of course, should not unilaterally make decisions for Palestine but instead reach out to them and be prepared if a request is received.

J.P. emphasized the importance of reaching out to ITC and ISC immediately to ensure they are aware of contingency plans. He also noted that allowing Palestine to participate remotely would violate the regulations which require a request for this one year in advance.

Ben asked for and received confirmation that IC is okay with a hybrid IOI as a contingency plan assuming there are no objections from ITC and ISC. He thanked Eslam for volunteering to take this on.

Ben then asked when a decision needs to be made about enacting the contingency plan. Fredrik said it certainly must be before May when lots of people will be booking flights. Moreover, he said April/May works well because it will likely follow the postponed ICPC event. Eslam suggested a decision be made by June, or the end of May because ICPC's stated plan is to schedule the postponed world finals before the end of June. Eduard indicated that any announcement needs to be made before the IOI registration system opens. Sandra similarly indicated the importance of trying to let people know before they book flights. On this point, Eljakim commented that some countries have already selected their teams and could be booking flights relatively early.

Eslam wondered if we could run a survey to assess the likelihood that each country can travel to Egypt. Ben felt this was a good idea. Araz mused that we might already have a rough idea via ICPC, but Eslam said this might not be relevant because of the specific location and because members are not countries. Eduard agreed noting that ICPC teams are run by universities which tend to be more conservative than governments. Given all this, Ben suggested IOI members could be surveyed a they were in advance of IOI 2022.

There was then some discussion about balancing the importance of informing the GA and not wanting to unnecessarily raise alarm. Eslam emphasized that he does not feel people need to be told to avoid buying plane tickets because all plans involve teams participating in person if they choose to. Sandra and Eljakim agreed that the wording of a message will be very important, and it needs to be made clear that the current plan is to host a fully in-person IOI (except for teams that have requested remote participation). Other phrasing was discussed. In the end, everyone agreed that it was important to be clear, to the point and accurate. Ben said he would craft a message and run it by everyone doing his best to incorporate feedback some of which will likely be contradictory.

J.P. asked if a decision had been made with respect to Iran and Israel. Ben said this had not been fully determined and so asked the group if it was okay to stop looking for a remote host. Nobody objected to this.

Returning to Palestine, IC agreed with Ben that there is no need to explicitly reach out to them at this point because all countries will be surveyed. Araz made the point that in general, reaching out to countries when there could be a travel issue is a good diplomatic thing that IC should try to do consistently.

Answering Jhonatan, Eslam said the winter meeting is not affected and will proceed as planned.

In closing, Ben said he will circulate a draft communication on November 7. He confirmed that Eslam will work on a contingency plan and will contact HTC and HSC, and Ben will write to ITC and ISC.