

International Committee

Minutes of the 11 August 2024 Meeting Held Online

Present:

Benjamin Burton	President	ab@maths.uq.edu.au	Australia	2021-2024
Eslam Wageed	Host 2024	eslamwageed@gmail.com	Egypt	2020-2025
Humoyun Sultonov	Host 2026	h.sultonov@digital.uz	Uzbekistan	2023-2027
Araz Yusubov	Elected	ayusubov@ada.edu.az	Azerbaijan	2021-2024
Eduard Kalinichenko	Elected	eduardische@gmail.com	Latvia	2022-2025
Sun Teck Tan	Elected	tanst@comp.nus.edu.sg	Singapore	2022-2025
Fredrik Niemelä	Elected	fredrik@niemela.se	Sweden	2023-2026
Sandra Schumann	Elected	sandra.schumann@ut.ee	Estonia	2023-2026
Eljakim Schrijvers	Treasurer	eschrijvers@eljakim.nl	The Netherlands	
J.P. Pretti	Secretary	jpretti@uwaterloo.ca	Canada	

Welcome

Ben welcomed everyone. Jhonatan Castro and Flora Retfalvi sent their regrets.

Australia

Ben left the meeting for this discussion because of IC's conflict of interest rules.

J.P. reminded everyone that Australian Maths Trust will not be sending a delegation to IOI 2024 because of security concerns. They will remain the official organizing body for Australia at IOI 2025 and beyond. Parents of contestants who have competitive programming scientific credentials will act as leaders for Australian students so they can attend IOI 2024 and participate under the IOI flag.

He continued to say a few issues remain to be determined, although a consensus was growing by e-mail. Indeed, after a short discussion, it was agreed that these leaders/parents are not official members of the GA and cannot participate in official votes. They should attend all GA meetings except, to err on the side of caution, not those where tasks are discussed because of the potential appearance of integrity concerns.

Eslam confirmed that the set-up for quarantine will not add any additional concerns.

Eduard will follow-up offline about a couple lingering issues related to the associated display IOI statistics.

Conflict in Gaza

Ben reminded everyone about the request from some countries to sanction Israel because of its role in the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. He asked for feedback from the IOI community which everyone had the chance to review. He hoped that IC could focus for now on what it can achieve at this meeting, but also noted the recent email about doing something systematic. Ben argued that IC may not be able to come up with a consistent view of facts and the situation. Instead, he said IC needs to decide if anything within its power should be done. As a starting point, he displayed some options separated into what IC can do immediately and what can be left for the GA to decide at IOI 2024. He asked that everyone work to refine

the possible options and give their opinions on the matter starting with a discussion of what, if anything, IC should do right away.

Sandra indicated she was curious how abstentions would count if IC were to treat the email responses as a vote. Ben replied to say that IC promised it would not be used as a vote. Eduard said that if it was a vote, abstentions would not count

Ben then “went around the table” asking everyone to weigh in. These comments have been anonymized and summarized below because IC agreed that regulation N3.7 applied here and that this was a situation where the vote should be anonymous. Revealing the identity of people making comments and arguments would effectively deanonymize the vote.

- Personally agrees with the position that Israel should not be sanctioned, but IC should not make a decision at this meeting for separate reasons. The GA was unhappy with IC sanctioning Russia and Belarus previously. Important for IC to make a decision only once and then let the GA decide a matter moving forward. Although the circumstances are different in this situation, this doesn't warrant IC acting independently. Also note that the number of email responses is not close to quorum for GA. Can only reasonably support deferring to GA.
- We can and should repeat what we did with invasion of Ukraine. That is, Israel contestants should compete under the IOI flag.
- Agreement with first point.
- Two points. First, IC is not able to give a professional opinion on any conflicts. We made a mistake with sanctioning teams, and we should step back and reflect on who and what the IOI is. The tragedy around Palestine has existed for decades, hence if we did not sanction Russia and Belarus, then this question would not have been asked about Israel. Do not see teams as representative of their governments. Be wary of biases. Second, it will be seen as an injustice if IC does not act now given that it was quick to act following the invasion of Ukraine.
- In response, this is why we need principles and rules.
- Propose that IOI stay away from political issues but only after sanctioning Israel in the same way we sanctioned Russia and Belarus.
- Agreed with deferring to the GA.
- This is a tricky issue. Trying to approach it from the position that IC represents the GA. The feedback we did receive points towards sanctioning Israel. However, we didn't hear from enough countries to act and to avoid making GA unhappy again. IC should send the matter to the GA.
- Agreed with one message we received which stated that the IOI cannot spend its resources dealing with international crises. Questions what sanctioning Israel would accomplish beyond punishing students. Feels the same way as during discussing the invasion of Ukraine – the IOI is the IOI and not about politics.
- Follow up to fully support a general discussion at the GA about whether the IOI should completely withdraw from issues like this or instead mirror what other organizations are doing.

- This is a very tough situation. There are similarities and differences between the situations in Ukraine and Gaza. Wants our focus to be the contestants and supporting their participation.
- Agreed that we need to be wary of bias but not sanctioning here is not an automatic indication of bias. There are some differences between the two situations specifically with respect to the IOI. First, we know Israel will not be onsite and will only appear as participating after IOI 2024 via IOI Statistics. Secondly, other Olympiads and organizations are not sanctioning Israel en masse. This last point does, unfortunately, matter because it means not sanctioning Russia and Belarus would have been sending a strong message and sanctioning Israel now sends an especially strong message. On this last point, if IC decides not to sanction Israel, it needs to be very clear that this should not be interpreted as support of its actions in Gaza.
- Noted that Israel will not be acknowledged during IOI 2024 itself (e.g. during opening and closing ceremonies or the official ranking of contestants).
- This is something they have been thinking about and discussing for a long time. Torn between what to do as individual and what to do for the IOI noting that these are not always in synch. Wonders if the decision you should make is the one that lets you sleep at night and for them, this means treating Israel the same as Russia and Belarus. What is happening in Gaza is no better than what is happening than in Ukraine. Clarified that it is not necessarily fact the GA was unhappy with IC making a decision on Russia and Belarus. No vote was taken on this. A clear difference between the situations is that it is known in advance that Israel will not be on site.
- Good points just made. Expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that we don't have a great way to treat these situations on behalf of the GA. Also agrees that we cannot always be apolitical, and it is not feasible to never make decisions. Would really like instructions from the GA.
- Cited risk in interpreting how the GA felt in the past. We also need to be wary of cultural differences. Some people don't necessarily feel comfortable speaking up.
- Acknowledged potential own bias but the two crises differ, and Russia's actions were decidedly more one-sided.
- Doesn't see a lot of value in comparing details of the two crises. Thanks for questioning whether it is a given that GA was unhappy with IC deciding to sanction Russia without discussion in the GA. Pointed out that given the current circumstances, a decision or lack of decision on Israel has only two effects: how IOI statistics are displayed and the message it sends. Therefore, wondered if a compromise would be to propose to GA that Israel be sanctioned by participating under the IOI flag. The GA would then make the final decision in Alexandria.
- Agreed about comparing crises but this could explain making different decision(s) now than two years ago with Russia and Belarus.
- Liked idea of making proposal to IC because it is an option this time. In 2022, Russia and Belarus would otherwise have been participating onsite.

Ben then returned to the slide and removed options that nobody spoke in favour of (i.e. banning Israel completely, sanctioning Palestine, removing sanctions on Russia and Belarus now before IOI 2024, and not raising the issue at the GA). The discussion continued.

- Clarified that the difference between proposing something to the GA and not taking any action now is about messaging. No matter how it is framed, a decision to not act will be interpreted as supporting Israel.
- Agreed and cannot support IC not taking any action now for this reason.
- Strongly disagreed. There are surely more than two countries doing bad things and we do not comment on them. If anything, this discussion is the best argument against doing what we did with Russia. That was a mistake but agree that IC cannot undo it before IOI 2024. We are stuck with a previously unprincipled decision and so now need to be incredibly careful. It is being manipulative to say we are making a statement by not doing or saying anything.
- Agreed with previous speaker and said we should separate messaging and action.
- Response to say that if IC decides not to do anything then we will certainly be asked why we did something in one situation and not the other. Does not know how we will answer that.
- Agreed. This is the main issue. That is, although we made the wrong decision with Russia and Belarus, if we don't act now, then people will not trust us because we are measuring the conflicts in two different ways.
- We cannot argue that we should make a mistake now because we made one before.
- Responded to concern about being approached at IOI. IC can decide to withdraw from politics entirely to explain why it is not acting now. Wants us to make the stand that we are not political, and we should focus on our mission to promote computing and informatics. As a result, the option of removing all sanctions now was added to the slide. Supports this approach and the message it sends to other Olympiads.
- Reiterate that Israel participating remotely explains why a different decision can be made now.
- Also believes the 2022 decision was a mistake despite personally strong opposition to the action of the Russian government. Suggestion of making a proposal to IC is a good faith way forward even though his heart is with the philosophy of avoiding political issues. Would support removing all sanctions now but can also support proposing Israel participation under the IOI flag to the GA.
- We should decide to sanction Israel first and then remove all sanctions.

After discussion, the first motion to vote on was refined to the following question:

Should the IC decide now that the Israeli students compete under the IOI flag? YES/NO

The vote was taken with 4 votes for YES and 4 votes for NO. After consulting the regulations about ties, it was determined that IC did not vote to act now.

After again clarifying the options, the IC then voted on the following options with the result to be determined by the Schulze method.

A) IC formally proposes to GA that Israel competes under the IOI flag in 2024, to be voted on in Egypt.

- B) IC formally proposes to GA that IOI withdraws from political issues immediately. A consequence would be removing all sanctions from all parties.*
- C) IC formally proposes to GA that we follow the Olympic Games (IOC).*
- D) IC formally proposes to GA that, after the decision regarding RUS/BLR/ISR, we do not involve ourselves in any more political issues.*
- E) IC does not make any formal proposal to GA (“none of the above”).*

A short discussion ensued about the possible unsuitability of the phrase “political issues”, but no better alternative was proposed.

Ben indicated that it would take some time to run the Schulze method. He confirmed with everyone that they are okay following up later with an email YES/NO vote on the winning option.

Post Meeting Follow-up

Ben indicated that even after cycle-breaking, the vote ended in a tie between A and D. He said the next step is to communicate this to the GA and schedule time during GA meetings to discuss the issue.