

## International Committee

### Minutes of the 22 September 2024 Meeting Held Online

#### Present:

Sun Teck Tan	President	tanst@comp.nus.edu.sg	Singapore	2024-2027
Eslam Wageed	Host 2024	eslamwageed@gmail.com	Egypt	2020-2025
Jhonatan Castro	Host 2025	jhtan@jhtan.com	Bolivia	2022-2026
Wolfgang Pohl	Host 2027	pohl@bwinf.de	Germany	2024-2028
Eduard Kalinichenko	Elected	eduardische@gmail.com	Latvia	2022-2025
Sandra Schumann	Elected	sandra.schumann@ut.ee	Estonia	2023-2026
Benjamin Burton	Elected	bab@maths.uq.edu.au	Australia	2024-2025
Ágnes Erdősne Németh	Elected	erdosne@inf.elte.hu	Hungary	2024-2027
Eljakim Schrijvers	Treasurer	eljakim+ioi@gmail.com	The Netherlands	non-voting
J.P. Pretti	Secretary	jpretti@uwaterloo.ca	Canada	non-voting

#### Welcome

Sun Teck welcomed everyone.

Fredrik sent his regrets. Eljakim and Wolfgang were only able to attend partially, and Jhonatan's flight was delayed which eventually meant he was only present for a short part of the discussion. Humoyun Sultonov did not attend. As outgoing members of IC, Flora Retfalvi and Araz Yusubov attended briefly for any lingering issues from IOI 2024 that required them to be involved. For example, Flora briefly reminded everyone of documents she sent at the end of IOI 2024 (questions for Bolivia and social media suggestions) which J.P. said he would move to the shared Secretary drive.

#### Handling of Medalists at Closing Ceremony and Other Reminders for Future hosts

Sun Teck made everyone aware of complaints received about how an individual medalist was singled out during the IOI 2024 closing ceremony. The concern was that it distracted from other medalists on the stage. He acknowledged that this was clearly unintentional and stated that we should remind hosts to avoid this in the future. Agreeing with Ben's suggestion that all medalists should be treated the same (and not everyone will be comfortable being singled out), J.P. said he would add this to the IOI host checklist document.

There was some discussion about the suitability of holding the closing ceremony during dinner with no consensus reached.

Eslam said he felt the idea of holding the closing ceremony on Day 6 was very beneficial and should be encouraged.

#### Exception for Age Limitation at IOI 2025

Sun Teck reminded everyone that we have a request for an exception to the age limitation rule for IOI 2025. He said there does not seem to be an appetite for a general regulation change and Eduard agreed saying that is how he interpreted the feedback from the GA at IOI 2024. Sandra said we need to take care about reading straw polls as a binding opinion especially because some polls did not have a very clear result.

On the particular exception request, Ben said his understanding is that this not only about an exception but also about interpreting the rule as it relates to time zones. Given that, he said he favours using the most permissive time zone. Ben argued that rounding in a way that favours contestants has precedent (e.g. with medal boundaries). Eduard acknowledged this and J.P. confirmed for him that the student in question was born at 3am where a permissive approach would deem them eligible.

Sun Teck noted that we have been asked for an exception so should vote on that. Eduard agreed but said we also need to discuss how to interpret the regulation.

Ben noted that using AoE (anywhere on earth) is common and what matters here is whether or not this particular student is able to participate at IOI 2025. Sun Teck then called that question and IC voted unanimously to say that, yes, this particular student can participate at IOI 2025.

### **Sanctions on Israel**

Sun Teck began the discussion on the sanctions on Israel imposed by the GA during IOI 2024. He said he wrote to the presidents of other Olympiads suggesting a declaration joint with UNESCO stating that all science Olympiads should not entangle with any political or diplomatic issues. He said he has yet to hear back but is hoping there will be agreement to no longer entertain sanction requests. He outlined the danger of a slippery slope saying that logic dictates sanctions must now be considered for at least the US, the UK, France, Palestine and Ukraine. Sun Teck argued that a common declaration would mean we can stop wasting time. He said that, of course, the GA would need to agree. Finally, Sun Teck said that sanctions and these discussions are not achieving anything, but instead they are sowing hatred instead. He would like to avoid a vicious cycle and follow the motto of “Peace begins with us.”

Ben emphasized that this is a pitch that does not need to be made to IC but instead has to be made to the GA in 2025. He said that with all these arguments in front of them, the GA did decide in favour of sanctions with a 2/3 majority. Given this, to see a contradictory public declaration would be surprising.

Wolfgang had to leave at this point in the meeting.

Sun Teck raised the issue of what GA decided with respect to the timing of the sanctions. Everyone concurred that GA decided they begin with IOI 2025. Eslam said he was not present for all the GA discussions and trusts IC’s take on this but does note that others clearly misunderstood this. Sun Teck suggested we send a message to GA to indicate this.

Ben said messaging is critical and any sense that this is “hush hush” is problematic. He wondered, regardless of how we feel about them, what the point of a sanction is if they are quiet. He emphasized that nobody is trying to hurt the kids and without publicization, that’s all that happens. Secondly, he commented that we lose control of the messaging if we don’t announce the sanctions publicly. He noted that he has seen mention of it on social media, some of which was right but much of which was factually incorrect. Ben reminded everyone that in 2022, we sent a message about the sanctions to ioi-announce and then posted this message to the IOI website.

Eslam agreed saying that a statement on the IOI website is important.

Sun Teck asked what the message should be. Ben and J.P. pointed out that it is both a responsibility and burden that the IOI President must bear. They acknowledged how difficult this is given Sun Teck’s disagreement with the sanctions. Eduard felt we need to separate our personal opinions from the message.

The committee agreed to stick to the facts of GA's decision and that the Office of the IOI should formulate a statement.

Concerns about the map on the IOI 2024 website were raised again. It was acknowledged that there are limitations on what the host can and cannot do.

### **New Country Applications**

Eljakim joined the meeting at this point.

J.P. agreed to follow the meeting with an email summarizing the received applications and his personal recommendations. He noted, however, that one country requested a quick decision.

A discussion ensued about how to handle the application from a very small country hoping to lean on an existing larger neighboring country already part of the IOI. He said he feels the request as received should be denied because they clearly do not meet the normal requirements. However, he said we should find a more general way to allow countries to participate when it is not possible to meet these requirements.

Sandra emphasized this point saying she would really like to find a way for this to happen on the principle that all people from all countries should have the potential to compete at IOI.

Eduard made a counterargument. He said his preference is that if we end up rejecting this application, we could explicitly allow contestants of the small country to take up one of the spots on the team of the larger neighbour.

Eslam disliked this agreeing with Sandra.

Eduard wondered if an IOI presence in the smaller country is sustainable. He said he is more likely to accept the application if it comes from a group or organization likely to remain involved for the long term even if a contestant is rarely sent to the IOI. J.P. said he did not have enough information to judge this.

Sun Teck said we have standard requirements and if a country is depending on another, they do not qualify. He cited examples of past rejections. Eduard responded to say that it might not be realistic to expect a very small country to meet these expectations. Sun Teck noted that recent ideas about providing resources to countries could help even smaller new countries reach the required standard.

Eslam said this issue has come up before and suggested we speak to people involved at that point.

J.P. pointed out his discomfort of accepting a country only because they have the resources and a wealthy neighbour to support them.

Eduard said that we don't currently have enough information to accept the application and so thinks he agrees with J.P. He said we need enough initiative to train and select a team within their capacity.

Eslam said the most important commitment is to attend the IOI and paid fees.

Sandra said agrees in principle that we may be discussing a country in a privileged position but there are many other small less privileged countries that would also benefit from arrangements that allow them to join the IOI. She questioned whether there are enough people in these tiny nations to put in the effort required to join IOI and it would not be fair to put the onus on students themselves.

Eljakim said we are discussing the issue in too much depth. He said there is no problem with one country helping another and this happens all the time. He said the question has to be about where the driving force originates. It should be from a small country itself.

This topic ended with agreement that J.P. would be in touch with the small country to seek more information. He and Sandra committed to working together to find a more general solution. The plan was to hopefully revisit the specific and general requests in March.

### **Updates on IOI 2025**

Sun Teck said he and Jhonatan discussed IOI 2025 at ICPC and there are discussions about changing details. He said that he, Eljakim, and J.P. will likely visit Bolivia later in 2024 to determine the state of planning for IOI 2025 and how to move forward.

Related to this, Eljakim said he was in Uzbekistan last week and had very positive meetings about early preparations for IOI 2026.

Later in the meeting Sun Teck asked for approval of funding to cover travel to do this kind of work. Eslam supported this emphasizing to IC how much Eljakim helped Egypt and the IOI in general. Funding was approved with no objections.

Also later in the meeting, Jhonatan joined and agreed to consider concerns about altitude sickness.

### **Online Certificate System**

Eduard said three questions have been raised about moving towards a generic system to provide certificates online:

1. Should it be password-based in general?
2. Is it okay to make past years' certificates available?
3. For 2024, since it is an IOI resource, can we make a generic certificate available to Israel?

There was a quick and clear answer of "Yes" to #3.

No consensus was reached on #1. Eduard felt that password protection is not necessary because the data is already publicly available.

Everyone felt the answer to #2 was also "yes" but there was debate about whether or not it should be a local certificate or more generic certificate. Eljakim said the reason we care about these certificates is because students need them for proof. Therefore, he recommended the use of a more general certificate and that we only do this moving forward for simplicity and ease of verification. Answering Eslam, he said that it easy to connect to the registration system.

Eduard raised concern about confusion around two different-looking certificates for the same IOI.

In the end, everyone agreed to let Eslam and Ricardo continue implementing the system which IC can comment on before release.