

87th session of the IAU Administrative Board

Extraordinary session convened virtually in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

26 May from 14:30 - 16:30 CEST

DRAFT AGENDA

- **Item 1.** Draft Agenda
- **Item 2.** Report on activities undertaken by IAU in response to the Covid-19 pandemic
- **Item 3.** Assessing the feasibility of holding the IAU 16th General Conference as scheduled; discussion and decision on the IAU General Conference
- **Item 4.** Report from Board members on key issues they face and suggestions on (a) how IAU can support its Members and (b) how the Board Members can support the vision, mission and work of the IAU in the current context.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Item 1. Draft Agenda (5 minutes)

Approval of the agenda

Item 2. Report on activities undertaken by IAU in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (15 minutes)

- Weekly virtual IAU Executive Committee Meetings
- IAU Global Survey on the impact of COVID-19 on higher education
- [IAU Webinar series](#)
- Virtual Global Meetings of Associations
- [Webpages dedicated to the impact of COVID 19 on HE sharing information and displaying resources](#)

Item 3. Assessing the feasibility of holding the IAU 16th General Conference as scheduled (45 minutes)

The COVID-19 pandemic impacts the higher education sector heavily and everywhere around the world. The future is uncertain and predictions for the September to December semester

The health and socio-economic crisis impacts on countries vary, but concern all. The economic impacts on higher education are already being felt and future impacts are being envisaged. The health crisis is not over and both the health and the socio-economic impacts are being analysed.

International travel is not likely to be restored soon and international mobility will be disrupted for quite some time. The likelihood of having a vaccine ready and in use by November is low despite all research being carried out across continents. Many national and international events have been cancelled or postponed way into 2021.

This context calls us today to consider the feasibility of holding the IAU 16th General Conference as scheduled on 3 to 6 November 2020.

Scenarios worked on until May 2020

Preparing for the event as planned (Scenario A)

The Conference Programme Committee has worked on the concept note and the structure of the programme; for most plenary sessions, invitations to plenary speakers have been sent out (prior to the lockdown phase); the call for proposals has been advertised; the Conference website has been developed and is ready to be launched. However, due to the current situation and the high level of uncertainty regarding the feasibility of holding the conference as planned, it was decided to postpone the launch of the Conference website, initially planned for the beginning of April.

Preparing for a potential postponement (Scenario B)

Following the Executive Committee meeting which was held virtually on 23-24 March rather than in Paris, the Committee decided to meet once a week in order to assess the situation regarding the conference and to prepare contingency measures.

In parallel, the IAU Secretariat has been in close contact with UCD and Andrew Deeks in order to assess the situation in Ireland and to examine the implications of a postponement on the Conference and on commitments with service providers.

A virtual meeting of the IAU General Conference Programme Committee was held to discuss the programme and scenario A and B.

It was agreed that a decision regarding the General Conference should be taken no later than June 2020 hoping that June would provide more clarity on the developments of the pandemic and its impacts on society. April and May have now past since then and it is time to prepare for a decision.

It is the first time that the Association is facing a situation where it may not be possible to hold the General Conference as initially planned. Had it been an international conference, it would have been a possible solution to cancel or consider virtual alternatives, but as it is a governance conference of the Association where elections of the leadership take place, the situation is More complex. The contingency plan has been discussed and elaborated in collaboration with the Executive Committee and is presented in the following section.

Contingency plan

Legal framework

The regular timeframe in between General Conferences is 4 years as indicated in the IAU Constitution (Art. 12 IAU Constitution). In Art 12 it is stipulated that the place initially agreed upon by the Board for a General Conference can be changed by the President of the Association ‘in case of emergency’. It also stipulates that *“It may be convened in extraordinary session on the written request of the majority of Members addressed to the Administrative Board or, if so decided, by the Administrative Board by a two-thirds majority of the Board Members present.”*

Considering this legal framework, the Executive Committee suggests to consider the current situation as an emergency or “force majeure” given the extraordinary circumstances. It therefore invites the Administrative Board to discuss the feasibility of holding the General Conference, taking into account the various stages of the pandemic around world and, paying particular attention to the advice of the President of UCD as host of the Conference. Following the discussion, the Administrative Board is invited to decide whether to postpone the IAU 16th General Conference or not.

Governance perspectives

1. Elections

Regarding the elections of the Administrative Board, the rules of elections stipulate that the candidates needs to be *“actually present at the General Conference”* (Art 3 rules of elections). Art 17 stipulates that *Only serving Executive Heads of Member Institutions and Organisations in good standing and actually present at the General Conference are eligible for election to the Administrative Board.* This means that elections for the Administrative Board require physical presence of the candidates and the voters during the General Conference. It is therefore not an option to organize the elections from distance.

The period of mandate for the members of the Administrative Board is four years (Art. 18 IAU Constitution), however for the IAU President the period of mandate spans the time in between General Conferences (Art. 14 IAU Constitution). Elections for the President and the Administrative Board have always been held in conjunction. The duration of their respective mandates have also always run in parallel.

Given the extraordinary current circumstances, the Executive Committee proposes that, in case of a postponement of the General Conference, the mandate of members of the Administrative Board will be extended until the next General Conference.

2. Strategic plan

In case of a postponement of the General Conference, the Executive Committee proposes that the IAU Secretariat continues to work within the framework of the current strategic plan as a guiding principle for its activities and the following strategic plan will be presented at the 16th General Conference for adoption.

Proposed dates in case of postponement

Due to the level of uncertainty of the ‘behaviour’ of the pandemic and the risk of second waves, suggestion is to prepare for a one year postponement. This would allow IAU to hold its event at a regular time of year, and would in principle avoid clash or competition with other events which have their annual events taking place in the first part of the year.

August and September are not considered as possibilities as these months correspond to a holiday period in many countries and/or to the start of the academic year. December was equally excluded as UCD holds the conferring ceremony beginning of December and afterwards it is a busy period due to the end of the year holidays, leaving as options October and November.

At UNESCO, two important events are taking place during these two months in 2021, namely the UNESCO World Conference of Higher Education (3rd WCHE) and the UNESCO General Conference. The dates and venue for the UNESCO World Conference of Higher Education has not been officially announced and it is not yet clear whether the current crisis will have an impact on the organisation of this event. However, UNESCO is tentatively planning to hold the 3rd WCHE in Barcelona in the first week of October. The UNESCO General Conference dates have not yet been officially adopted, however, the two potential sets of dates are envisaged: 2-17 or 9-24 November. Considering this information, the proposed dates for a potential postponement of the IAU 16th General Conference are **26-29 October 2021**.

This would translate as follows for the meetings taking place prior to the Conference:

DAY	EVENT
Sunday 24 October	Meeting of the Executive Committee
Monday 25 October	Meeting of the Administrative Board
Tuesday 26 October	Meeting of the Administrative Board and Inauguration of the General Conference
Wednesday 27 October	General Conference
Thursday 28 October	General Conference (elections)
Friday 29 October	General Conference

The 17th General Conference will take place 4 years after the 16th General Conference, meaning that if the 16th General Conference is held in 2020 as planned, the next will be held in 2024. However if it is postponed to 2021, the 17th General Conference will be held in 2025.

Furthermore and for information: in case of postponement:

- the IAU International Conference 2021, agreed to take place in 2021 in Qatar, will also have to be postponed by one year if the GC is postponed. Discussions with the University of Qatar will be initiated if decision to postpone is indeed retained as the best way to move forward.
- the Members of the IAU and the broader higher education community will have to be informed in the days following the AB Meeting and a communication plan will be unrolled.

Recommendation by the Members of the IAU Executive Committee

Given the current context, considering the outcomes of the weekly meetings of the Executive Committee since mid-March, and considering the information at hand on 19 May 2020, the Members of the Executive Committee recommend to postpone the IAU 16th General Conference till 26-29 October 2021.

The virtual IAU Board Meeting on 26 May will allow to take an informed decision on this point.

The Administrative Board is invited to decide on the following:

- holding or postponing the 16th General Conference and, in case of the latter, consider the dates proposed for its postponement (26-29 October 2021).
- the extension of the mandate of the current Board, considering the exceptional circumstances in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, until elections are held during the 16th General Conference in 2021.

Item 4. Report from Board members on key issues forward and proposals how IAU can support its Members (45 minutes)

Board members wishing to speak will be given the floor for a maximum of 2 minutes to report on the following:

- 1) What are expected key future impacts (challenges and/or opportunities) of the current crisis on higher education in your country (region) that will be on the agenda for 2020 and beyond?
- 2) Suggestions on how IAU can best support its Members during this crisis;
- 3) Suggestions on how Board Members can support the vision and mission of the IAU.