

Minutes

ICHO Steering Committee meeting, Paris, 2019 January 16-18.

A) Members

Elected:

- I-Jy Chang, Taiwan (2016, 2018),
- Alexander Gladilin, Russia (2018)
- JL Kiappes, USA (2016, 2018),
- Gábor Magyarfalvi, Hungary (2017), chair
- Petra Ménová, Czech Republic (2018)
- Ben Pilgrim, UK (2017)

Ex officio:

- Martin Putala, Slovakia (2018)
- Petr Holzhauser, Czech Republic (2018)
- Anne Szymczak, France (2019), president of organizing committee
- Ugur Bozkaya, Turkey (2020)
- Nobuhiro Kihara, Japan (2021)
- Patrik Willi, Switzerland (2023)
- Mahmoud Al Qawasmi, UAE (2025) absent, substituted in some meetings by Khalfan Almarashda

Co-opted:

- Worawan Bhanthumnavin (Thailand)

Also present in various meetings:

Mathilde Routier (project manager of IChO2019)

Didier Bourissou, Elise Duboué-Dijon, Clément Guibert, Baptiste Haddou, Aurélien Moncomble (Science Committee members)

Johann Olivier (representative, La Ligue de l'enseignement, the organizer agency)

B) Agenda points

Jan 16, Arrivals,

Jan 16, 17:00-19:00 Session 1

- 1. Concise report about IChO 2019, general picture of preparations (personnel, funding, contacts, website, registration fees...)**

Preparations for 2019 are well-advanced. Committees and teams are working as expected. The science committee will have a record number of authors and contributors (84), with a core team very familiar with the IChO. Local travel/accommodation details are arranged by a non-profit agency, La Ligue de l'enseignement.

Hiring of student guides is underway. They are mainly chemistry and language majors.

The planned budget is 2,1 million euros. That includes the increased participation fees: 3000 USD for a six-member delegation, 1500 USD for observers and 3000 USD for guests. It was noted that observers and guests are only expected with full delegations.

The organizing committee is strongly urging all countries to pay all fees in advance by bank transfer. French regulations preclude acceptance of cash by the organizing ministry. Credit card payments will not be possible either. In addition, bank transfer costs must be borne by the senders (so that exact invoiced amounts arrive, banking instructions: OUR).

The SC noted that even if wire transfers are preferred, it is unavoidable to find a solution for emergency cash payments at registration. It was confirmed that teams will not be able to register until all fees are paid in full.

The olympiad website: <https://icho2019.paris> is functional. On Facebook the organizers have an own page, and plan to take control of the IChO page (@InternationalChemistryOlympiad) established earlier. The two pages will merge soon. Future organizers are advised to carry on using this page with many followers.

Organizers will do their best to assist participants with visa requirements.

The olympiad will follow the usual schedule with mentors and students living in different parts of Paris throughout the event. Official arrival locations are two airports and railway stations (also for teams arriving early). Registration will be at the student quarters.

A mock exam to thoroughly test and review exams will be conducted just before the olympiad. That has proven very useful in Tbilisi and in Bratislava.

New regulations say that the Steering Committee chair or their delegate chairs the Jury meetings. For the exam discussion sessions familiarity with the problems, authors and the Jury procedures is necessary. The following general procedure was proposed: the organizers nominate session chairs, who need to be approved by the Steering Committee using a secret ballot.

Students will have ample resting and socializing time but will be supervised closely during the competition part of the olympiad to avoid unwanted activities.

If time allows, there could be a short extra Jury meeting to review practical results before contact with students. At the same time the last Jury meeting is expected to be very short.

IUPAC has proposed cooperation and some activities for the students (e.g. meeting with IUPAC president Qi-Feng Zhou). Fitting these in the tight schedule might not be easy.

2. New, observing and lapsing countries for IChO-2020 (the SC makes the decision on invitations for countries not participating in the last two olympiads)

- Countries that have completed their two years of observation and will be first time participants with a team: **Luxembourg, Qatar, United Arab Emirates**. Qatar observed in 2016 and 2018, but the Steering Committee has accepted that as two consecutive observations, because in the summer of 2017 Qatar could not travel due to political conflict.
- Country invited for their 2nd observation year, and expected to confer with the SC in the summer: **Sri Lanka**
- New applications to observe have arrived from **Bangladesh** and **Trinidad and Tobago**. Both countries have national olympiads in place or underway and a strong supporting institution. They are invited to send one observer to Paris (paying a regular observer fee). **Mali** is also invited as a first-time observer, because their observers in 2018 did not speak English well. The Steering Committee will have a short discussion with all observers in their summer meeting.
- **Hong Kong** has applied to participate in the IChO. They participate in other olympiads and sporting events with a national team, however Hong Kong is legally a part of China. The SC has learned that Hong Kong has received an invitation to the Chinese National Chemistry Olympiad, and given their legal status, has declined their invitation.
- **Cuba** is invited to participate in 2019. They competed in 2017, so they receive an automatic invitation. **Liechtenstein** cooperates with the Swiss team, and will receive an invitation, but they are unlikely to send students this year.
- **Paraguay, Ecuador, and Tanzania** has expressed their interest in the IChO, but have not applied to observe before the deadline. They will be eligible to observe only in 2020.
- **Egypt, Kuwait and Oman** were participants earlier but missed multiple years. They need to restart observation unless their national selection is carried out by the organization and mentors familiar with the procedures of the IChO.

Jan 17, 8:30-12:30 Session 2

3. Visit accommodations

- Mentors will be living at Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris (CIUP) in single-room quality student housing. The campus there has good transportation (metro). The central building contains a restaurant and all the necessary meeting rooms.
- Students will stay at Hotel CIS Paris Kellerman, a simple hotel in rooms with 2-4 beds. A park and sport fields are next door. Organizers were reminded to think about the quick meal service necessary.

Jan 17, 13:30-16:00 Session 3

4. Report from Slovakia and Czech Republic, feedback from mentors and students

The organizers presented the official report and key numbers: 300 students, 254 adult participants from 82 countries, 313 staff members. The total cost was 1,47 million EUR (without VAT). Some participation fees were still not paid at the time of the meeting.

In the opinion of the SC and many participants the 50th was one of the best olympiads ever. The work and dedication of the organizers was profusely thanked.

The feedback forms circulated after the olympiads returned with a lot of praise and a few suggestions that the organizers and the SC recommended for future olympiads.

5. Reports from future Olympiads

2020: The location of the olympiad was changed to Istanbul for both logistical and scientific reasons. The dates will be 7-16 of July, earlier than later olympiads, but in line with regulations. The hosting venue will be Istanbul Technical University (ITU). Preparations are underway, with details presented to the Jury in summer. Students will stay on the university campus on the European part of town, and mentors will be housed on a different continent. The Steering Committee meeting is planned for January 15-19, 2020.

2021: Japan, July 24- August 2. Everything is on track.

2022: A host is urgently needed. So far, no official intent to host was received. SC members were asked to contact countries that have shown interest / have not hosted for a long time.

2023: ETH, Zürich, Switzerland

2024: open

2025: United Arab Emirates: A formal letter offering hosting was received from the minister of education.

6. Discussion of financial support

Funding is available to support countries having difficulty to raise the participation fees. Actual money comes from several organizations: 2 500 USD IUPAC, 2 000 USD Chemical Society of Japan (-2020), 2 000 USD Chinese Chemical Society at Taipei (-2021), 2 000 USD United Arab Emirates (-2020), 2 000 USD American Chemical Society (-2021), altogether 10 500 USD.

In addition, according to the Jury decision 500 USD from the 3000 USD participation fees can be allocated for this purpose if needed.

The Steering Committee will use a similar procedure as in the previous years: Country contacts will receive a link where they can submit a detailed application for support. Applicants will be able to indicate the sum necessary for their country. The deadline for applications

will be the end of March. SC members will review applications and vote by a secret ballot about approval before April 15th.

Jan 17, 16:00-19:00 Session 5

7. Ceremony venues visit

Opening ceremony will be at Maison de Chemie (House of Chemistry), closing at the headquarters of UNESCO, both in downtown Paris.

January 18, Friday, 9:30-16:30 Session 5-6-7

8. Visit of laboratories and discussion of preparatory problems

Exams will take place at the Lycée Pierre-Gilles de Gennes, the same building that hosted the IChO in 1990. There are plenty of laboratory spaces, and individual students will have workspaces that are wide and well separated.

Laboratories are not air-conditioned (similarly to other locations), but even in the case of a heat-wave students will have to wear closed shoes and be fully covered (long pants and no sandals).

Discussion of the practical problems focused on the specification of advanced topics. A few minor suggestions were made during the problem-by-problem review.

The advanced fields of the theoretical tasks were discussed in a joint session. The listing of the topics not needed at the olympiad was found to be quite helpful. The problems themselves were discussed by the Science and Steering Committee members in group discussions. The preparatory problems will be released on schedule.

January 19, Friday, 16:30-18:00 Session 8

9. Miscellaneous issues

- The syllabus changes were not introduced for a vote in the Jury in 2018. A few suggestions have arrived from countries in the fall. These were mostly accepted in the text. Austria has proposed a different enumeration of the skills expected from students. Although very clear, the SC felt that this method would be too prescriptive for the IChO and recommends staying with the present format.

The separate lists of known concepts and facts were merged. The number of advanced practical skills will increase from 2 to 3.

The new syllabus slightly increased the range of knowledge expected from the students based on the practice of the past olympiads. However, the SC would like to indicate that further such increases are not welcome.

The proposal (with changes highlighted) and the necessary regulation changes will be circulated in the spring and handed out in Paris. Feedback is welcome before the olympiad, but no discussion of the details is planned at the Jury meeting before the vote.

- Two cases of irregularities came to light in 2019. One student was found with a cheat sheet and received zero points. Another student did not use the official 2019 calculator and received a point deduction.

The SC recommends the following protocol to be followed in conflict resolution of unforeseen cases:

- The local Science Committee makes recommendations for irregularities.
 - If mentors disagree, a panel of three Steering Committee members will be available for deliberation during arbitration (I-Jy Chang, Alexander Gladilin and Gabor Magyarfalvi in 2019).
 - As last resort, a final decision could be asked from the Jury according to regulations.
 - All cases and sanctions (without names and countries) are reported to the Jury.
 - Persons involved in deliberate misconduct (especially mentors) are not welcome at future olympiads. A list of names is being passed on by Steering Committee chairs.
- The “Guidelines for organizers” document was updated by Petra Ménéová based on the experiences and practices of the organizers of the 50th IChO. There was a consensus that these were a great improvement. SC members were asked for further contributions, and the final document will be published on the relevant websites.
- It was proposed that the Jury meetings could be expedited by adopting practices from parliamentary procedures. These rules will be tested in 2019:
- Proposals would need to be seconded by another country before any discussion.
 - A speaking list would be kept to determine the order in which people would speak.
 - No country can speak twice until all interested countries have spoken.
 - There will be a signal to stop proceedings if the issue being voted on is not clear to everyone.
 - Having countries seated in a circle could improve communications, but is not practical this year.
- IUPAC is intending to get the IChO students involved in their Periodic Table Challenge game. The SC is open to the idea in general but sees difficulties with timing and funding. Signing the memorandum of understanding between the two parties would need more discussion on the details.
- Two minor changes in regulations were not voted on in 2018: clarification of the status of observers and a mandatory external review of the preparatory problems before publication. As these are not urgent, they will be reintroduced when other regulation changes are scheduled.
- Other issues in the regulations that could be considered in the long-run, but need further input from the International Jury:
- Representation on the Steering Committee is presently required for 3 continents. This is going to pose problems in the future. Proportional representation seems to be equally difficult to implement along regional, cultural, language or historic lines. Requirements could be removed in the future, and any candidates could be voted on.

The workings of the International Jury are not well defined between olympiads, but in emergency cases hard decisions might be needed in those periods. New regulations could clarify how the Jury could work throughout the year if needed.

- Alexander Gladilin made a presentation about the Mendeleev Museum in St. Petersburg. A celebratory lecture by the Museum on the 150th anniversary is possible during the olympiad.

10. Preparation for meetings during the olympiad

The Steering Committee will meet on 25th of July at 14.00 (tentative time). Agenda points:

- discussing participation and developments for the 51st IChO,
- reviewing financial support situation,
- meeting observer countries,
- reviewing future olympiads.

The SC will be introduced at the 1st Jury meeting and will make sure that all delegations are aware of the issues discussed at later Jury meetings with handouts and announcements.

Agenda points for the 3rd Jury meeting:

- practical exams review (possibly at an earlier time)
- report on the 2019 participation and the financial support distributed
- report from Turkey about 2020
- reports about other future olympiads (hopefully with new hosts)
- voting on the syllabus change (recommendations and suggestions are welcome up to the time of the olympiad, but plenary discussion of details is not planned)
- elections for the Steering Committee (JL Kiappes and Petra Ménova were asked to coordinate nominations and elections, a single vote is expected)
- no regulation changes are scheduled