

# IAHR

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS  
ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE POUR L'HISTOIRE DES RELIGIONS  
Member of the Conseil international de la philosophie et des sciences humaines (CIPSH) under UNESCO

[www.iahrweb.org](http://www.iahrweb.org)

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May 1, 2020

To: Officers of IAHR Member Associations/Societies and Affiliates,

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this message will find you all well.

Following the announcement of the cancellation of the Otago World Congress on March 26, 2020, the IAHR Executive Committee (EC) has discussed several issues regarding the Congress and associated business meetings. The EC has reached some conclusions, which I would like to convey to you in this email.

**First**, the Chairs of the Otago Congress Committees (Advisory Committee, Organizing Committee and, above all, Academic Program Committee) will produce documentation for the planned Congress, to be uploaded to the IAHR website. This documentation will be different from conference proceedings or a book of abstracts. It will be a simple record of i) paper titles and participant names, including keynote speech titles/speakers, ii) the Congress theme and structure, iii) the list of the members of the Congress Committees, iv) other appropriate matters. In other words, we will NOT publish submitted abstracts because some may not be able to present full papers on the same topics at some other conferences if we publish their abstracts, due to the duplicate publication policy.

**Second**, in place of proceedings, the Managing Editors of *NVMEN*, the Series Editors of the IAHR Book Series, the Director of the Otago Congress and I will directly contact the organizers of planned panels and invite them to send proposals to *NVMEN* and the Book Series and thereby materialize their plans in another format. This special Call for Proposals will be sent soon after this message.

**Third**, as for the International Committee Meeting and the General Assembly which were, in accordance with the IAHR Constitution (Articles 4 & 6) and Rules (1de, 2ab, 4ab, 5ac, 10a), going to take place during the Otago IAHR Quinquennial World Congress, the EC has, considering the present state of emergency, decided the following.

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With the cancellation of the 2020 Quinquennial World Congress, the meetings of the IAHR International Committee (IC) and General Assembly (GA), have to be cancelled, too.

The main issues that the IC was going to discuss were the proposals of the EC to change the name of our Association and to insert a new term in the Article 1 of the Constitution. Both proposals necessarily entail amendments to the Constitution, which can only be decided upon by the GA, upon the recommendation of the IC. However, according to the current Constitution, a General Assembly only meets at a Quinquennial World Congress. That is, without a World Congress, there will be no General Assembly. If we want to change the Constitution in order to hold an online World Congress and/or an online General Assembly some time between 2020 and 2025, that change can only be made by a regular General Assembly because the change requires a modification of the Constitution. Therefore, as long as we strictly follow the Constitution and the Rules, we can neither change the name nor the Article 1 till 2025, even if we all agree to do so.

As five years is a long time, the EC has discussed the possibility of holding the business meetings online even though this possibility is not mentioned in the Constitution and the Rules. However, in light of differences in time and infrastructures across countries, the EC has concluded that it would be impossible to hold a GA and an IC Meeting online, at least for the moment.

As the situation surrounding the IAHR may change rapidly in the near future, we may be forced to take some action before 2025. However, we should also be careful not to modify the Constitution too easily for practical reasons. The incoming Executive Committee will continue discussing the issue while always welcoming and appreciating your frank opinions.

On the other hand, the EC has decided that the election of the next EC, which is solely the business of the IC and also can be conducted fairly easily by electronic means, should be held with no delay, for the sake of the smooth, continued functioning of the IAHR.

Therefore, there will be no IC Meeting but the election. The election will take place in August 2020 by using an e-voting service. (Please see “EC Electoral Procedures” below for more details.)

The recommendations of the IAHR Honorary Life Membership will be included on the ballot along with the EC candidates in August 2020.

**Fourth**, although we had to cancel planned events and meetings for this year, the EC believes that we should not stop promoting and enhancing international collaborations among scholars of religion. The EC welcomes your suggestions and ideas as to how to do so in the face of pandemics and increased ecological concerns. On top of that, the EC would like to know what you think about the possibility of online meetings in the future. I will send you a questionnaire following this message to find out the feasibility of online gatherings.

### **Executive Committee Electoral Procedures**

Based on the above arguments, the IAHR EC regards the present state of affairs as emergency so that the upcoming EC Election will be conducted electronically, following the planned schedule as below.

- Deadline for alternative nominations– (as already announced) May 22, 2020
- Deadline for the withdrawal of a nominee– May 21, 2020 (if he/she wants to leave a possibility to rescind his/her withdrawal)
- All officers of IAHR member associations and societies will receive an e-Bulletin Supplement in July, 2020, which will contain a brief statement of candidacy of each nominee.
- When the IAHR Secretary General receives information about (up to two) representatives voting on behalf of the member society or association, she will send them a link to an online e-voting system in mid-August.
- The representatives will be asked to vote using the system between August 20 and August 23.
- The results will be announced on August 26, which is the day the International Committee meeting was planned to be held if the Congress took place in Otago.

\*At a regular International Committee Meeting as well as during the upcoming electronic Election, nominees whose candidacy is unopposed shall be declared “elected unopposed” (see Rule 16g). All others are elected by secret ballot. Consequently, there will be a need for casting votes only if there are more than one nominee to one or more of the eight officers to be elected or more than four nominees to the four EC members at large.

### **Honorary Life Membership Recommendation Procedures**

All officers of IAHR member associations and societies will receive the statement of HLM recommendations from the HLM Advisory Committee, which will be included in the above-mentioned e-Bulletin Supplement, July, 2020.

All officers of IAHR member associations and societies will receive a link to an online e-voting system in mid-August.

The representatives of IAHR member associations and societies will be asked to vote using the system between August 20 and August 23. Each national and regional association will have two votes.

The results will also be announced on August 26.

\*At a regular International Committee Meeting, if there is no opposition, the IC will simply approve HLM recommendations with applause. As we cannot make or hear such applause, I have to ask you to endorse the recommendations using the same e-voting system.

Last but not least, thank you for taking time to read this message. The EC knows you are especially busy these days due to the problems caused by COVID-19. The IAHR has also been experiencing unprecedented misfortunes—none of its World Congresses has been cancelled since its establishment in 1950—but the EC will try to turn them into opportunities for innovations. Your continued support and cooperation would be more than ever appreciated. Please feel absolutely free to ask questions or give suggestions.

With very best wishes for your health and wellness,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Satoko Fujiwara", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Satoko Fujiwara

Acting Secretary General of the IAHR