



Strategic Sustainability Plan Meeting

December 21, 2020 8:00AM EST

By conference call

Minutes

Meeting Video & Documents: <https://witsa.org/strategic-sustainability-plan/>

Welcome & Opening Remarks

WITSA Chairman Mr. Yannis Sirros welcomed the Board of Directors and provided an overview of his priorities for WITSA, as was originally outlined in his November 17th chairman candidate presentation (ref. <https://witsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Sirros-Chairman-PPT-2020.pdf>). Mr. Sirros suggested the four pillars of his presentation should be incorporated into the Strategic Plan: : (1) building the WITSA brand, (2) enhancing WITSA's public policy leadership, (3) increasing value for WITSA's members, and (4) ensuring long-term financial stability by developing new revenue streams.

Roll Call

Anders Halvorsen conducted the roll call. The following attended the call:

Mr. Yannis Sirros (SEPE)
Mr. Santiago Gutierrez (CANIETI)
Mr. Sean Seah (PIKOM)
Mr. Hemant Kumar Chaurasia (CAN Federation)
Mr. Md. Shahid-UI-Munir (BCS)
Mr. Alexandr. Yesayan (UATE)
Mr. Zoran Lazarevski (MASIT)
Mr. Matthias Ifesieh (ITAN)
Mr. Brian Shen (CISA)
Ms. Angela Mondou (TECHNATION Canada)
Mr. Robert Janssen (ASSESPRO)
Dr. Jim Poisant, WITSA Secretariat
Ms. Molly Poisant, WITSA Secretariat
Ms. Alicia Standridge, WITSA Secretariat
Mr. Anders Halvorsen, WITSA Secretariat

WITSA's History in Perspective

Jim Poisant referred to the "World Congress on IT: A Proud History" document, which is posted on the above-mentioned meeting website.

Mr. Sirros congratulated Mr. Hemant Kumar Chaurasia on being appointed the new WITSA Treasurer.

Mr. Sirros believed one area where WITSA can provide better value is by engaging members in business connections and exchanges within the global network. WITSA also has to be a leader in setting the stage for the digitization of the economy, helping SMEs as well as governments and everyone in between. This is a great opportunity for WITSA.

Santiago Gutierrez mentioned that he believed WITSA must become very pragmatic, and to engage businesses and members.

Existing and Potential Revenue Source Programs

1. World Congresses (WCIT 2021/WCIT 2022/WCIT 2023)

Dr. Jim Poisant the two upcoming WCITs in 2021 and 2022 and invited Sean Seah to provide a brief overview of his efforts to attract the interest of Indonesia and China PRC to bid for the 2023 event. Mr. Seah mentioned that another association in Indonesia has expressed an interest in the WCIT for 2023 or 2024. Until the pandemic is gone, we should not expect a resolution with regard to Indonesia. Mr. Seah has also reached out to a China PRC association about membership and WCIT in 2024. These are preliminary stages and WITSA will be kept apprised of any feedback.

Zoran Lazarevski stated that a regional WITSA event in the Western Balkans may be of interest. More thoughts will go into this and Zoran will revert once more information is available. This could be a smaller regional event or a bigger WCIT-type event. WITSA must be making efforts to become closer to its national and regional counterparts.

Matt Ifesieh mentioned that ITAN is still interested in hosting WCIT 2023, but that a commitment from the Nigerian government is still lacking. He estimated that there was a 50% chance of ITAN ultimately receiving the financial commitments necessary to host the event. The government is currently weighing the pros and cons of hosting a WCIT. Matt called for any support from WITSA leadership to support the outreach efforts to the government and also any other WITSA programs that can catch the interest of the government officials.

Yannis Sirros stated that the WCIT is a huge event but is more regional and local than it should be. We have to attempt to increase the visibility globally at the next two events so that a wider interest is attained.

Mr. Seah encouraged ITAN to consider doing a hybrid event whereby a large online delegate base could offset much of the cost of running the event. Online business matchmaking would be an important part of this effort. WCIT 2022 Malaysia will rise to the challenge and develop a successful hybrid platform for its event, which hopefully can serve as an example for any future WITSA events.

Mr. Sirros argued that the biggest challenge would be to develop effective low-cost marketing strategies that make it possible to obtain a large number of virtual delegates from around the world while also making a substantial profit.

2. ICT Excellence Awards

Brian Shen presented a proposal for a new WITSA awards program whereby registration fees could be collected for nominations in a set of award categories pertaining to both the private sector and to governments. Mr. Shen believes up to \$100,000 can be gained from a registration-fee based award program. WITSA should also consider combining the awards and BCEP program as combining these two programs may bring more revenue than if they are organized separately.

Angela Mondou mentioned that there is a lot more competition in the awards arena now than in previous years, and that the challenge is how we can distinguish ourselves from the competition.

Mr. Sirros argued that with a fee, there would be greater expectations for trophies and visibility. We need to be careful that costs do not outweigh the potential revenue.

[ACTION:] Angela asked WITSA to develop a **one-pager on the benefits** received from the WITSA awards program. This would be helpful for members to assess from their memberships whether a fee-based award program is feasible. Mr. Seah mentioned that the benefits should include a mechanism for winners to get more business, such as market access. We can help them market their award-winning products and solutions throughout our global network.

Anders Halvorsen suggested that an overall WITSA Awards sponsor could provide additional or alternative revenue to the new awards program. This would be a branding exercise where companies such as Microsoft or Google can obtain some marketing by “owning” the awards (e.g., “Global ICT Excellence Awards” by Google). The BOD agreed to take this into consideration.

[ACTION:] WITSA will develop a proposal based on the input received and circulate to the BOD for approval.

3. Global Partner Program (GPP)

Jim Poisant stated that the GPP could be quite valuable to WITSA. Regional economic development organizations around the world spend significant amounts on marketing their geographic locations. WITSA can help them reach out to businesses far more efficiently and

cheaper than they can do on their own. Poisant asked: What is a reasonable target for new WITSA Global Partners. There was a consensus that the GPP may be the most achievable additional revenue source going forward.

Poisant mentioned that marketing material and a detailed presentation had been posted on the meeting website.

The BOD agreed that each Vice Chairman should produce at least one new Global Partner within the next six months. Each new partner will bring in \$15,000 in revenue for WITSA. **[ACTION:]** WITSA will revisit the benefits document in order to better reflect the hybrid events model, and then circulate to the BOD for action.

Robert Janssen argued that the current program posted on the WITSA website does not sufficiently explain exactly who we are exposing the GPP program to. If we are going to sell this efficiently, we need to develop a better understanding of our audience, their profiles and fit. Poisant stated that this would be addressed immediately after the conference call.

4. Business Excellence Certification Program (BCEP) Status

Jim Poisant provided a brief overview of the BCEP program, which is explained in the Strategic Sustainability Plan posted on the meeting website.

Mr. Seah mentioned that selling a certification program such as BCEP is challenging because the interest from our members is not yet there. This is largely because our corporate members are not sufficiently aware of WITSA. This can be addressed by making BCEP certification a requirement for applying for the WITSA awards. It could also be a condition for seeking national association membership. Another opportunity is through the B2B portal, so that any company that wants to do business matchmaking through our portal must be BCEP accredited.

Ms. Mondou thought the accreditation market was very saturated around the world and that spending time and resources on the BCEP was perhaps not the best use of WITSA's efforts.

Robert Janssen mentioned that ASSESSPRO has a successful "excellence in software" business accreditation program. The challenge for WITSA is to provide a value that directly relates to companies' bottom line, such as their RFI/RFP processes. How do we find out how many of our member companies are actually ready for global business? The BCEP should focus strictly on the mechanisms and standards necessary to do international business. Focus can be two-fold; policy and international B2B. What does excellence mean to the market we are targeting?

Mr. Sirros echoed the previous statement that the business certification and matchmaking programs need to be combined. This will give us more visibility and enables us to provide more value. How can these programs expand companies' business opportunities internationally?

5. Membership Dues

Following a recommendation by Vice Chairman Matthias Ifesieh, the BOD unanimously approved the ITAG Gambia membership application.

Alicia Standridge provided an explanation of dues types/status; regular/full members and associate members. The associate members are not paying dues but are receiving WITSA information and are invited to participate in meetings. They are not eligible to vote, nominate candidates to the WITSA awards program, or be represented on the WITSA Board of Directors and its positions and committee leadership positions. Ms. Standridge mentioned that a substantial list of countries and associations was produced by the WITSA Secretariat in order to help the Vice Chairmen in their membership recruitment efforts.

Mr. Sirros mentioned that WITSA must work on its membership benefits and marketing so as to be more attractive to would-be new members. Ms. Molly Poisant encouraged the BOD to review the “Why Join WITSA” marketing document to see how it can be approved. **[ACTION:] WITSA Secretariat circulated this document to the membership for review during the 1st week in January.**

Robert Janssen added that every industry association is facing the same challenges today: Digital Transformation. We all need to better understand our audience. How many of our organizations are ready to play global, business-wise? We need to develop a better understanding of this. We need to be more data-driven in order to develop better value propositions going forward. Mr. Seah concurred. How do we conduct our business in a way that benefit our members’ members better?

Janssen expressed that we **need to operate better digitally** so that we can serve our members’ members better. A *digital transformation assessment tool for associations* already exists and we should take advantage of this by applying for it collectively. We will get collective, standardized information; a minimal critical mass of information that we can use to better develop our value propositions. The current version of the WITSA Strategic Sustainability Plan describes many good tools but does not adequately take into account the digital transformation impact from the “Coronami” (the lasting impact on the ICT industry by the SARS CoV-2 virus). These assessments will come from the front lines, what we learn from our member organizations, and provide the greatest possible value for us. **[ACTION:]** Mr. Janssen will share the document with Dr. Poisant following the call.

6. Regional Meeting/Conferences/Smart Cities

[ACTION:] Jim will follow up with Alex Yesayan in order to get his feedback on a potential regional conference in Moscow.

7. Global Business Exchange Program (GBEP) (Potential Source of Revenue)

Mr. Sean Seah provided a brief program description. This is an ongoing efforts and Mr. Seah believed that it could become a revenue source for WITSA in the next year or two. **[ACTION:]** Mr. Seah will provide a more detailed presentation on the GBEP at the next BOD meeting.

8. Corporate Membership Dues

Mr. Sirros provided an overview of DIGITALEUROPE's membership and dues structure. The BOD has 20 members, 10 of which are corporate and 10 of which are European national ICT associations. The chairman of the organization is always a corporate member while the vice chairman is an association representative. The main focus of DIGITALEUROPE is on representing corporate policy offices at the EU level, and corporate dues levels are much higher than for associations. The top corporate dues level is around 60,000 Euro, while association dues max out at around 10,000 Euros.

Mr. Sirros was not convinced that having corporate members is the best approach for WITSA at this time. Instead, WITSA should develop a substantial advisory board, with the key personnel from leading companies around the world, to help present and comment on policy papers for WITSA. They can also help us with the WCIT program, by participating as speakers and review content. Once an advisory board is up and running, it may be easier to convince them of the benefits of corporate membership.

Mr. Seah concurred. He also warned about the potential conflict of interest between the self-serving interest of corporations and WITSA's higher level agenda focusing on the big-picture benefits of digital technologies for everyone.

[ACTION:] Dr. Poisant will work with Board members to develop a list of potential Advisory Council members.

Upside Revenue Streams

Sean Seah provided a brief overview of potential revenue sources and projections. A main goal is to have at least one or two additional global partners per year. The business certification program can also be an important revenue source as well as business matchmaking. Regional events are also a promising revenue sources going forward. Revenue sharing for WITSA event delegate recruitments is another interesting plan. Mr. Seah presented the following 2021-24 preliminary projections:

Potential Sources of Revenue (2021-2023)*last updated: November 30, 2020*

| Name of Program | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|---|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Global Partner Program | \$15,000 | \$30,000 | \$45,000 | \$60,000 |
| \$15,000 Each Partner | | | | |
| Business Certification Program | \$19,800 | \$39,600 | \$79,200 | \$79,200 |
| \$99.00 Per participant | 200 Participants | 400 participants | 800 Participants | 800 Participants |
| Regional Events | \$100,000 | \$200,000 | \$200,000 | \$200,000 |
| Lic fee and % of the delegates | Lic Fee | lic fee | Lic Fee | Lic Fee |
| registration fees (TBD) | 1 event | 2 events | 2 events | 2 events |
| Hybrid Conference fee/WCIT 2021 | | | | |
| Online Delegate Registration Fee | \$50.00 | \$75.00 | \$75.00 | \$75.00 |
| 1/3 PIKOM, /1/3 Host, 1/3 WITSA | \$24,750 | \$49,500 | \$74,250 | \$74,250 |
| Based on registrants | 1500 | 2000 | 3000 | 3000 |
| World Congress on IT | | | \$750,000 | \$750,000 |
| Membership Dues | \$35,000 | \$40,000 | \$45,000 | \$50,000 |
| Global Business Exchange Program | \$49,500 | \$99,000 | \$148,500 | \$148,500 |
| (B2B Portal) | 500 enrolless x \$99.00 | 1000 enrollees x \$99.00 | 1500 enrolless x \$99.00 | 1500 enrolless x \$99.00 |
| Other | TBD | TBD | TBD | TBD |

Dr. Poisant mentioned that the WITSA ICT Excellence Awards would be added as a new category in the potential revenue sources table.

Open Discussion

[ACTION:] Mr. Sirros suggested that WITSA produce regular webinars in order to make WITSA more visible in the regions. Focus should be: What is WITSA, what are the member benefits, our policy activities, etc.

[ACTION:] Mr. Munir urged WITSA to shorten the time for future meetings to no more than an hour or an hour and a half, as it otherwise will be difficult for members to participate during the entire agenda.

[ACTION:] Brian Shen requested that the Taiwan Regional WITSA Office should be removed from WITSA documents and webpages. Dr. Poisant responded that this would be done ASAP.

Next Steps

[ACTION:] Mr. Seah urged all the potential revenue ideas to be sent to members for further input early next year.

Mr. Sirros wished everybody happy holidays and a happy new year. He was optimistic that conditions would be favorable for in-person meetings by WCIT 2021 in Bangladesh and that he looked forward to seeing everyone there.

END