



MINUTES

WITSA Board of Directors Meeting

08:00 - 10:25 EDT

March 24, 2021

Virtual Meeting (via GoToMeeting)

Yannis Sirros, Chairman

V4

ROLL CALL

ATTENDED

Mr. Yannis Sirros	SEPE, Greece,
Mr. Sean Seah	PIKOM, Malaysia
Mr. Hemant Kumar Chaurasia	CAN, Nepal
Eng. Tarek Abd-elmonem Taha	EITESAL, Egypt
Dr. Boris Komrakov	InfoPark, Belarus
Mr. Santiago Gutierrez	CANIETI, Mexico
Mr. Alexander Yesayan	UATE, Armenia
Mr. Julian David	techUK, United Kingdom
Mr. Alberto Patron	CESSI, Argentina
Mr. Mathias Ifeseih	ITAN, Nigeria
Md. Shahid Ul Munir	BCS, Bangladesh
Ms. Angela Mondou	TECHNATION, Canada
Mr. Alexander Mora-Delgado	CAMTIC, Costa Rica
Mr. Brian Shen	CISA, Taiwan
Mr. Zoran Lazarevski	MASIT, Republic of N. Macedonia
Mr. Robert Franz Janssen	ASSESPRO, Brazil
OTHER ATTENDEES	
Mr. Ong Kian Yew	PIKOM, Malaysia
Mr. Grant Son	FKII, South Korea
Mr. Javier Arizmendi	CANITI, Mexico
Dr. Jim Poisant	WITSA Secretariat
Mr. Anders Halvorsen	WITSA Secretariat
Ms. Alicia Standridge	WITSA Secretariat
Ms. Molly Waldron Poisant	WITSA Secretariat

REGRETS

Mr. John Kyle	Bermuda Chamber of Commerce, Bermuda
Mr. Antonio Cimorra	AMETIC, Spain
Mr. Toshio Iwamoto	JISA, Japan
Ms. Min Hee Choi	FKII, Republic of Korea
Dr. Vasile Baltac	ATIC, Romania
Mr. Francis Fong	HKITF, Hong Kong



MINUTES
WITSA Board of Directors Meeting
TERM 2020-2022

08:00-10:55 EDT
March 24, 2021
Venue: Go To Meeting (Online)

V 4

INTRODUCTIONS/CALL TO ORDER

Chairman's Remarks

Mr. Yannis Sirros started the meeting by welcoming all participants.

He then referred to the main items on the agenda: the financial figures to be presented by the Treasurer, the progress of work on the next WCITs in Bangladesh and Malaysia, the presentations to be made by the Finance Committee, the Strategic Planning Committee, the Global Policy Action Committee, the Priority Papers for 2021, the Business Development Committee and the Committee on Education, Training and Human Resources.

The Chairman then referred to the decision needed for the approval of the new members, and finally to the issues to be discussed concerning the ICT Excellence Awards and the B2B Platform.

Roll Call

Mr. Anders Halvorsen conducted the Roll Call. *See list above.*

Call to Order / Approval of Minutes

Dr. Jim Poisant welcomed the Board and asked for a motion to approve the December Minutes. Mr. Sirros made the motion; it was seconded by Mr. Alex Mora.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Hemant Chaurasia reviewed the Financials for the first two months of 2021. Total Assets are \$431,264.78; Total Liabilities are \$68,376.65; Total Equity is \$362,888.13 and Total Liabilities & Equity stand at \$431,264.78.

Actual Total Revenue for the first two months of 2021 is \$8,084.93 against a budget of \$9,000. Total Expenses for the first two months were \$69,422.82 against a budget of \$77,320.34 for an Actual Change in Net Assets of -\$61,337.89 against a budget of -\$68,320.34, making WITSA under budget by \$6,982.45 for the first two months.

DISCUSSION BLOCK

WCIT Status Reports

World Congress on IT Bangladesh - 2021

Md. Shahid-UI-Munir provided an overview of the WCIT 2021 preparations. WCIT 2021 will be held in Dhaka, Bangladesh from November 11-14, 2021. Preparations are being made for this congress to be a hybrid event. A copy of his presentation is [available here](#). Dr. Poisant said he had been in regular contact with Mr. Munir and the government of Bangladesh about his concerns regarding the lack of progress made thus far.

Poisant said the Board was going to have to help promote the event to ensure it is successful as a World Congress. Mr. Sirros suggested setting up monthly meetings with Mr. Munir, his team and government to help aide in making progress on speakers, sponsors, registrations, etc. for WCIT 2021. Dr. Poisant said he would actually like to see these meetings held weekly or bi-weekly to speed up the progress. Mr. Munir agreed and said these could start as soon as April 7th. Dr. Poisant said that Board Members would be made aware of the timing of these meetings and would be welcome to attend. **[ACTION]**

Mr. Munir said he hoped that within fifteen days the list of speakers should be approved, and communications sent out. **[ACTION]**

World Congress on IT Malaysia - 2022

Mr. Sean Seah introduced Mr. Ong Kian Yew to brief the Board on plans for WCIT 2022 to be held tentatively from September 13-15, 2022 in Penang, Malaysia (northern part of the peninsular of Malaysia). Mr. Ong said by then, they are hopeful this can be fully in-person event, but they are also prepared to do this event as a hybrid.

Mr. Ong Kian Yew reviewed the hosts and sponsors to date and shared details of the venue, the Penang Spice Arena, which can seat up to 8,000 theatre-style. He also reviewed the hotel options and nearby amenities available to attendees.

PIKOM offered to host Spring 2022 Board meeting; (this issue was discussed at the end of the Board meeting).

Lastly, Mr. Ong Kian Yew shared details of the Organizing Committee that had recently been formed. An addendum to 2022 contract with Malaysia/PIKOM will be initiated and signed due to payment changes. **[ACTION]** Payment of \$187,500 to be made by end of 2021. **[ACTION]**

A full copy of this presentation is [available here](#).

WCIT 2023

Dr. Jim Poisant and Mr. Tarek Taha led this discussion. No member has committed to host WCIT 2023 to date, however BTECH of Bahrain has expressed an interest. Additionally, Mr. Seah's China contact is establishing contact with a country association, but most likely they will not be interested until 2024. There is no additional information from Indonesia at this time. Dr. Poisant agrees to draft a document from WITSA for Mr. Seah to use in helping to sell WCIT 2023. **[ACTION]**

Standing Committee Updates

Finance Committee

Mr. Sean Seah reported that total cash & investments stood at \$380,842.00, as of February 28, 2021. Total Assets, as reported during the Treasurer's report, are at \$431,264.78. PIKOM intends to pay \$187,500 of the remaining \$375,000.00 balance, during Q4 of 2021, with the remaining \$187,500.00 payable sixty days prior to the WCIT 2022 (July 2022).

Strategic Planning Committee

Mr. Santiago Gutierrez briefed the Board on the work of the newly formed Strategic Planning Committee. Mr. Gutierrez reviewed a summary of a discussion by the Committee. He said the process for an effective implementation was required for a successful business plan. This includes buy-in from all leadership and involvement from the full Board. Joint work in developing the plan is as important as the plan itself, Gutierrez said.

Mr. Gutierrez said the work will take about three to four days spread-out over a month to do the important work. The major pillars of the plan include defining the strategy, business plan and finally the budget and work plans.

Mr. Gutierrez said there will be a "quick and neat" approach consisting of three key steps: Questionnaire, Interviews & Workshop. The first phase will include the Strategy and Business Plan. Mr. Gutierrez asked for Dr. Poisant to have the plan outline reviewed by the Board and to register any changes; Dr. Poisant said he would revert back once he received the outline from Mr. Gutierrez. **[ACTION]**

Mr. Mora stressed the importance of feedback early in the process from stakeholders to ensure everyone is on the same page. Mr. Gutierrez agreed. PPT to be provided.

Global Policy Action Committee /2021 Priority Papers

Mr. Anders Halvorsen stated that the past year has been challenging for the ICT industry, as it has been for society at large. The pandemic had highlighted the importance of digital technologies in general, but also several vulnerabilities across the world. As WITSA looked at its priorities and activities for 2021, it was clear that digital transformation and resilience would remain a key focus and a baseline for WITSA's planned activities.

Halvorsen referenced the *2021 WITSA Membership Survey*, where public policy was a central theme. Public policy continued to be the top priority for WITSA members and developing high-level policy papers that enhance WITSA's stature as the global voice for the ICT industry and that supports our members' own advocacy outreach remained the number one value requested from members.

Unsurprisingly, cyber-security, data protection and privacy, as well as issues related to digital transformation and solutions to navigate a post-COVID-19 world were the top concerns among our membership.

Halvorsen mentioned that WITSA had already done some significant work in these areas (see WITSA's policy reports at <https://witsa.org/statement-resolution/>), and will consider what new initiatives should be undertaken this year through the *Global Policy Action Committee* at an upcoming meeting in April.

Other policy issues that ranked high among the membership included the *Global Skills Gap* and the *Future of Work*, challenges related to international trade, restrictions on the *Free Flow of Data Across Borders*, ensuring a better representation of women in the ICT sector as well as inclusion of

people with disabilities, supporting a new e-commerce agreement at the World Trade Organization, and continued challenges to the multistakeholder approach to Internet governance.

In regard to drafting of policy papers in 2021, two had already been published earlier in the year: “The Role of Government in Connecting the World - An Industry Perspective” and “The Impact and Contributions of ICT During a Time of Global Crisis: Embracing Digital Technology in the New Normal.” Both reports were posted on the WITSA website. At least two additional papers would be drafted, including an SME Action Plan (to be finalized in Q3). Other topics for consideration at the upcoming GPAC call included: Artificial Intelligence policy principles, and how to regulate disinformation on social media platforms.

Public Policy Chairman Angela Mondou mentioned that the GPAC would carefully adjust its action plan in accordance with the work currently undertaken by the Strategic Review Committee, Chaired by Santiago Gutierrez. Mr. Gutierrez concurred and proposed that the work conducted between both committees should be carefully coordinated. He would incorporate the GPAC action plan into strategic review as well.

Ms. Mondou pointed to the Membership Survey, where more than two-thirds of respondents expressed an interest in participating in our Global Policy Action Committee (GPAC); a good sign that members are willing to help WITSA improve its successes in this area. Following on from the survey, Mondou stated that another way to maximize WITSA’s policy impact was to engage more with similar-minded organizations by collaborating on issues of mutual concerns such as by co-signing multi-association letters of global interest. The GPAC would undertake to expand on WITSA’s existing alliances, such as the multi-association Digital Trade Network (DTN) initiative, and UNCTAD’s eTrade for All initiative. Ms. Mondou informed the BOD that the GPAC would also set up a Policy Paper Review Group, to assess whether any updates to WITSA’s catalog of policy statements are warranted. As respondents to the Membership Survey had urged WITSA to improve its sharing of information and best practices among the membership, the GPA would discuss producing a “WITSA Repository of Member Best Practices and Policy Papers”. She also mentioned that WITSA was in the process of enhancing existing policy reports with new graphic design, which was considered an important tool for maximizing their impact. These re-designed papers were being posted on the WITSA website.

Finally, Ms. Mondou informed the BOD that the GPAC would consider the organization roundtables or webinars in order to share best practices among regions, or on policy topics of importance to members. In her own experience at TECHNATION, roundtable could be a very effective mechanism for sharing important information among members.

Mr. Julian David suggested that WITSA should engage with the October 30-21, 2021 G20 Rome Summit and bring tech priorities to their attention. One such activity would be to write a letter with industry concerns. techUK was also on the parallel B20 organizing committee, and techUK staff would participate on the GPAC call do discuss potential other activities that WITSA could engage in vis-à-vis the G20. **[ACTION]**

Business Development Committee

Mr. Brian Shen, Chairman of the newly formed Business Development Committee, highlighted the Committee’s work during a series of meetings held January 27, March 4 and March 18, 2021. Mr. Shen reviewed various tasks, both event-based and certification-based, that the Committee has considered, including: Hybrid Conferences/Regional Events, Global Business Exchange Platform, Trade Visits, Business Excellence Certification Program, ICT Excellence Awards and the Global Partner Program.

Dr. Poisant shared a slide outlining the Committee's latest decisions on the items listed above. The Committee has decided not to charge a registration fee for the ICT Excellence Awards but rather to monetize this by charging fees for sponsorships and post-award marketing.

Dr. Poisant asked for a clarification on the multiple trade visits. Mr. Janssen from Brazil has agreed to float the Business Excellence Certification Program in Brazil to see if there is any traction there.

Dr. Poisant said we are also looking forward to an update on GPP sales in the Vice Chairman's respective regions.

Committee on Education, Training & Human Resources

Dr. Boris Komrakov brought forward a proposal to the Board to consider an education program to give children interested in informatics, proper training, and then a job. Dr. Komrakov's proposal suggests that WITSA Members can utilize this program, cost-free, for six months. This program goes a long way towards solving the issue of unemployed people age 15-24. The full IAMIT proposal is [available here](#).

Membership/Member Payment Status/New Member Outreach

Ms. Alicia Standridge stated that as of March 15, the total dues collected for 2021 was almost \$10,000.00 (from only 6 associations thus far.) She said members are doing well, year 2, using the Member Portal to update contact information and pay dues and that historically Q2 is when WITSA usually receives majority of the year's dues.

In early February, she sent each VC a regional spreadsheet to facilitate the possibility of growing membership within their regions. She asked each VC to establish contacts in countries or reconnect with country associations who were members of WITSA in the past and continue to stay in email contact with each VC monthly regarding regional membership growth.

DECISION BLOCK

New Membership Applications

Mr. Taha presented BTECH of Bahrain to the Board for full membership approval. Mr. Lazarevski presented ATIC of Moldova to the Board for full membership approval.

Dr. Poisant asked for any Board member who had a reason not to approve these 2 new members.

Hearing no comments from Board, Dr. Poisant announced the approval of both Associations as new full members of WITSA.

Mr. John Kyle as Vice Chairman – Caribbean

Dr. Jim Poisant informed the Board that since the December 2020 Board Meeting, Mr. John Kyle expressed an interest in retaining the Regional Vice Chair position for the Caribbean. Hearing no objection, Mr. Kyle was re-elected as Vice Chairman for the Caribbean.

ICT Excellence Awards/Title Sponsorship

Anders Halvorsen provided a brief overview of the draft WITSA Global ICT Excellence Awards program. The program had been posted on the meeting website prior to the call. Halvorsen noted that the draft program included separate awards for the private and public sectors, a proposal made by Mr. Brian

Shen in a prior meeting of the Business Development Committee. Some of the new award categories included a “Smart Cities” award, an Emerging Digital Solutions” Private Sector award, as well as a “Startup Ecosystem” public sector award.

A question was raised by Ms. Mondou as to whether a recognition could be given to innovative COVID-19 solutions. It was decided that the “Innovative eHealth Solutions” award should be amended to include COVID-19 related solutions in the award description prior to finalization and announcement. A timeline was also provided, including an announcement of the awards program and start of the nominations process by April 15th. A tentative deadline for submitting candidates was set at September 1st, with a virtual award ceremony to take place in connection with the November 11-14 World Congress on IT. Halvorsen also informed the BOD that the Business Development Committee at its March 18th meeting decided not to recommend charging fees for award nominations. The Committee determined that there was a high risk that such an initiative would undermine the reputation of WITSA as well as the awards program, and would have a negative impact on the number of nominations submitted. Revenue from a fee-based system was also likely to be negligible. The BOD agreed with the Committee’s assessment. The BOD approved a “Title Sponsorship” proposal from the Business Developments Committee, whereby one awards sponsorship would be offered for \$50,000. Benefits to the sponsor ranged from profile posting on the WITSA website, to presenting at a WITSA BOD meeting, signage recognition at the award ceremony, offering a webinar to all WITSA members as well as free admission to WITSA’s B2B Platform for one year.

The BOD also approved a proposal from the Business Development Committee to offer award winners an optional post-award marketing opportunity, which will include website recognition and discount membership of WITSA’s new Global Business Exchange. Award winners will be able to choose a six-month marketing agreement for \$5,000.00 or a one-year agreement for \$10,000.00 which would also include a customized webinar. Both proposals were posted on the meeting website prior to the call.

B2B Platform/Global Business Exchange (GBX)

Mr. Sean Seah asked Mr. Ong Kian Yew to present the Global Business Exchange Platform. Mr. Seah mentioned that a call had been held with FusionX, PIKOM, Dr. Poisant and Molly Poisant for feedback the week prior. Mr. Ong Kian Yew said this one stop business matching platform, will be on demand at any time. It includes a virtual exhibition and B2B matching. Mr. Ong Kian Yew reviewed the various functions of the platform. The Pilot will be limited to eight member economies (50 from each country for 400 companies in total) at the onset to work out any issues that may arise. From there, he said, we can add in additional members to the platform. For the first six months, this platform will be available to WITSA members free of charge, after which time it may be commercialized. Mr. Seah talked about adding a Request for Proposal (RFP) component to the platform. This would provide additional business opportunities for WITSA’s members’ members. Dr. Poisant asked if the Board Member’s members would want to be involved with this project. Mr. Taha asked when this would rollout to which Mr. Ong Kian Yew said the details will be finalized by the middle of April and launch by mid-May, for the Pilot. There was a discussion about the commercialization of the platform vs. the technical readiness of the platform. Mr. Taha asked the Board to extend the Pilot and work towards commercialization by WCIT 2022 (September 2022). Mr. Patron said the success of the program will be once business is being done through the platform, to have “success stories” and to make it as open as possible.

Mr. Taha suggested that WITSA be selective with the country associations participating in the Pilot to achieve the best outcome. Dr. Poisant reminded the Board that one main reason for doing this is for a revenue generator in the future. Per Dr. Poisant, the following countries have expressed an interest in being part of the Pilot program at inception: Malaysia, Canada, Taiwan, Argentina, United Kingdom,

Greece, Bangladesh, Egypt and Mexico. Dr. Poisant will go out to these countries and give them an option to join the Pilot; if they aren't interested at this time, WITSA will move on to other countries.
[ACTION]

Following a brief discussion, the Board approved moving forward with the GBX Platform.

Regional Events

Dr. Jim Poisant reviewed opportunities for members to host Regional Events in their respective countries. The licensing cost would be \$100K per event and the Value Propositions for Member include:

- The event will draw local, regional and global attention to their region and countries.
- The country will be in a position to promote its ICT industry, as well as its regions capabilities.
- WITSA will provide the host with sample programs accompanied by suggested content.
- WITSA will provide a list of 10 potential speakers to be considered for the program. In addition, WITSA will work with the host to secure at least five of the speakers on the program.
- Their country is likely to receive support from around the region. This support will include delegate registrations, marketing support, speaker recommendations and sponsorships from industry and governments.
- Event host are likely to realize a profit from hosting a successful event.
- Historically, whenever WITSA events have taken place the respective countries increased direct foreign investments.
- In the case where delegates attend the event in person, the local location will realize additional spending on lodging, food and tourism.
- It is anticipated that WITSA will provide each host with extensive marketing support, a Registration Platform to include Business to Business(B2B) matching capabilities, a comprehensive Event Operations manual, speaker recommendations/contacts, and expert advice.

A full list of benefits can be [found here](#).

Overview of WITSA BOD Meeting Schedule

Dr. Jim Poisant reminded the Board that the Fall Board meeting would be held in Dhaka, Bangladesh in November 2021. Virtual attendance will be offered. Looking ahead to the Spring 2022 Board meeting, Dr. Poisant asked the Board if they had the budget to travel to the same country twice in one calendar year. Mr. Sean Seah said that PIKOM would like to host the Spring 2022 Board Meeting in Malaysia. Mr. Patron suggested a virtual Spring 2022 Board meeting may be preferable; Dr. Poisant said it's a benefit for Board Members to see the venue and city pre-event to assist in marketing it back home. With that, the Board agreed to hold the Spring 2022 Board meeting in Malaysia.

OPEN DISCUSSION

Dr. Jim Poisant asked if there was any other business. Hearing none, he closed Open Discussion.

ADJOURNMENT OF BOARD MEETING

Mr. Yannis Sirros thanked the Board for attending the meeting and adjourned the meeting at 10:55am EDT.