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Dear all,

in this note we want to give you some background information on the decision of Council to run the 2021 edition of the Congress digitally only, and to move the physical Congress to 2022, which implies that the whole ISPRS cycle will be shifted by two years (the next Symposia will be held in 2024 and the next Congress in 2026). We hope that this additional information will make our rationale more transparent.

— The decision was based on the following arguments:

- While we do not know what will happen in 2022, it has become clear in recent weeks, that very few people, indeed, will go to Nice this summer. In addition to travel restrictions, many are not willing to travel without being vaccinated. For many potential participants, vaccination will not happen before summer or autumn this year.
- As a result, the 2021 meeting would have been mostly digital in any case. Thus, the real question was not the character of the 2021 meeting, but when (a) the next Congress and (b) the next General Assembly should be held.
- We can now hope to have a Congress in 2022, six years after the Prague Congress. Given that this year's meeting is only digital, the alternative would have been one in 2024 only. We believe that not having a Congress for a total of 8 years is rather risky, because by then the community might have substantially disintegrated. The way for ISPRS to remain relevant is to do something important and to remain visible. Bigger meetings are a means to do so.
- We believe it would be very difficult, indeed, to staff a new set of Commissions, working groups etc., when running a digital-only meeting. In addition, the new TCPs would have only had one year to prepare for a 2022 Symposia. Therefore, we believe a shift of the ISPRS meeting cycle is the better solution.
- As a face-to-face General Assembly is much easier to organise, in particular on a global scale, where time zones need to be taken into account and internet access possibilities vary widely across the globe, not to mention transparent, secure and fast

voting. With the 2022 Congress in the calendar, we therefore opted to shift the General Assembly to 2022, also.

- There is also a financial side: it is true, of course, that a digital meeting does not come for free. Nevertheless, it is much less costly than a hybrid meeting. Note, that contracts have been signed to rent the Congress Centre and many other facilities, and there is legally no way to cancel those contracts from our side. How would we explain to our members that we accepted a very significant financial loss (six digits in €) without even trying to limit the deficit by organising a Congress at that very Congress Centre with a hopefully balanced budget in 2022?
- Finally, our French hosts started planning the organisation of the Congress more than 10 years ago. Despite the pandemic, they are still very motivated to organise a physical meeting and to welcome the world to their country, although they have shouldered an extreme additional amount of work by agreeing to also organise the digital meetings in 2020 and 2021. In this situation, Council feels that we cannot say “thanks for the work – tough luck with the pandemic” and then ignore the deficit, and move on to another destination. Which signal would ISPRS send to the rest of its members and the community at large? Council believes that during these times, we all need to show solidarity with respect to each other - the Congress organisers need and deserve the support of the whole community.

To Council, these were the reasons to take the decision to have a face-to-face Congress in Nice in 2022. We also determined that this will be the last change in schedule, so should there be no improvement as far as the pandemic goes over the next 12 months, there will not be any additional change of dates. In concert with this decision, the whole meeting sequence will be shifted by two years, so we will have symposia in 2024 and the next Congress in 2026.

We hope that after reading these lines you have perhaps a little more sympathy for this decision, and we trust that you will stay committed to ISPRS and its aims.

All the best and thanks for your support of ISPRS.

Yours,



Christian Heipke