



**International Federation for Business & Professional Women**

**BPW International**

*Empowering Women to realize the Sustainable Development Goals*

Cairo, August 24<sup>th</sup> 2020

Dear Members of the International Board,

All my warm greetings to you. A lot of discussions and letters have been sent out to you. The clarifications regarding a virtual or a physical Congress were complicated and time consuming.

### **1-Virtual Congress**

Together with the International Planning Committee, I consulted the Constitution of BPW International thoroughly. We noticed new findings which everybody had overlooked so far.

### **BPW International Constitution**

“R18.1. The Constitution and Regulations comply with Articles 60 and seq. of the **Swiss Civil Code**. Amendments to the Constitution and Regulations must comply with Articles 60 and seq. of the **Swiss Civil Code**.”

### **Swiss Civil Code**

During COVID-19, Switzerland has put in force several COVID-19 Regulations adapting the Swiss Civil Code which are valid during the pandemic of COVID-19.

I asked VP Catherine to seek advice from a Swiss lawyer specialized in associations law. The lawyer stated that, based on the Swiss COVID 19 Regulation which the Swiss Government has put into place during the pandemic, it is impossible to organize a virtual Congress for an international organization of our extension. We cannot fulfill the conditions of the Swiss Law (included the special Pandemic regulation). Huge time differences, connectivity problems and problems of a stable connection are the hurdles (see for more details on technical problems the “International Planning Committee’s Feasibilities Assessment Report on a Virtual XXX BPW International Congress” by PIP Dr. Chonchanok Viravan. If BPW International does not comply with these requirements and violates the Swiss Law (ref. to our constitution), voting results could be null and void. It also opens room for legal actions against the voting. Therefore, legally speaking, the organization of a virtual General Assembly is unfortunately not possible for BPW International (see the explanations in the attached letter of the Swiss lawyer, Mrs. S. Habibian).

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## **2-Physical Face to Face Congress**

USA is the most badly hit country by the pandemic. After cancellation of the contract by the Hilton company in Orlando, the IPC tried to get quotations for the congress in other cities of USA such as Las Vegas to organize the Congress there. This was not possible and no quotations could be sent. What we got so far is the message that they are not able to send us offers. Canada is not willing to host a Congress. The big problem with USA and Canada is that the delegates from all the other countries will not get a visa. The USA borders are still closed and most of the European, Asian and African countries have travel bans to visit the USA.

According to our Constitution, BPW International has to take turns in the Regions where the Congress is organized. As we are now in a state of Emergency and as it is not possible to go the USA, one possible solution would be to postpone the turn of North-America and the Caribbean.

In this difficult situation, and according to some recommendations from the Affiliates to have the congress in a near area in the Mediterranean, 2 Affiliates offered to host the congress and this was already communicated to the executive during our meeting. BPW Italy offered to host the Congress in Palermo in April 3-6, 2021. Another offer came from BPW Valletta -Malta to have the congress at the end of March 2021. Both have international airports and facilities that make it possible for a large group to meet respecting the safety rules. Both affiliates sent all the quotations needed to set up the budget and calculate the registration fees. The registration fees range from 600 Euros for Palermo that offers a 5-day Congress including all meals, coffee breaks, the Gala Dinner - and Farewell Dinner. The rooms too are offered at a very advantageous price (75.- Euro per room). BPW Valletta -Malta is a little higher in the registration fees but also offers great venues for the congress and the social program with all the meals included. As this is an emergency situation and this is a serious matter, all the information has to be available to the International Board.

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As a virtual congress is legally not feasible, IPC still needs to investigate a legal possibility for the few delegates who cannot attend the Congress due to the Corona pandemic rules in their countries.

To move our organization forward during this pandemic is a serious matter which requires consultation with the International Board. IPC will inform you of the concrete steps on this matter within the next two weeks.

I wish you and all BPW members and all your beloved ones to be safe and healthy and send you my best wishes and warm regards,

*Amany Asfour*

Dr. Amany Asfour, International President of BPW

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