

**International Planning Committee's  
Feasibilities Assessment on Virtual XXX BPW International Congress**

By

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## INTRODUCTION

The XXX BPW International Meeting was originally scheduled to be held in Orlando, Florida USA on 21-25 August 2020. Details appeared on OrlandoCongress.bpw-international.org.

However, as the world is currently facing the Covid-19 pandemic, USA is the #1 country with the highest number of confirmed infected cases (<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>). Florida is one of the States that was hard hit by this pandemic. In May 2020, the Hilton hotel which was congress venue informed BPW International that it is unable to host the XXX BPW International Congress as scheduled and cancelled the contract.

In the first half year of 2020, people from many countries were not allowed to travel internationally. The lockdown of some member countries also blocks several BPW Affiliates from transferring funds to pay International dues. Other restrictions also include limited numbers of international flights, quarantine requirements depending from which country a traveler returns, etc.

One executive board member, North America Regional Coordinator Dawne Williams, sent a concept paper on a Virtual Congress which proposes that a Virtual Congress would be cost-effective, allow all member countries to participate, and would be concluded during 21-25 August 2020, the same 5 days time-frame. The Virtual Congress concept was discussed among BPW affiliates via various channels such as webinars, WhatsApp, telephone and other social media and several countries expressed opinions both pros and cons, but not with complete understanding of what is required for organizing Virtual Congress. RC Dawne's proposal was later revised in June 2020 to propose for 11 days for Virtual General Assembly.

As requested by the Chair of International Planning Committee (IPC), President Dr. Amany Asfour, we set out to analyze the feasibilities of holding the XXX BPW International Congress as Virtual Congress in 2020 and clarify many matters to BPW Affiliates and BPW International Executives accordingly.

**This feasibilities review covers:**

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## I. ABOUT BPW INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

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### 1.1 BPW International Congress

BPW International Congress is the major event of our organization that our members wait to attend. It is the best way to meet our BPW sisters from all over the world in person, give them opportunities to make new friends and reunite old friendships bond. Some of these friendship bonds last a lifetime. It reminds our members of how great our organization is and how important it is for our sisters from all over the world to unite and renew our commitment to improve the status of women and promote gender equality.

New BPW members or new executives of BPW Affiliates may believe that BPW International Congress is just like most other BPW Conferences, which could have been held in a webinar style online. In reality BPW International Congress is quite complex. As explained in more details in Appendix A traditional events at/around Congress and surrounding Congress include:

#### **Pre-Congress:**

- Executive Board Meeting
- Registration
- Regional Conferences
- Congress Orientation
- Resolutions Workshop
- Constitution Amendments Workshop
- International Board Meeting

#### **Congress:**

- Opening Ceremony
- Plenary Sessions
- Workshops
- General Assemblies
- Award Ceremonies
- Social events

#### **Post-Congress:**

- Post-Congress International Board meeting
- Executive Board meeting and Hand Over meeting

The most complicated session of BPW International Congress is the General Assembly.

The key elements of BPW International Congresses are:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Speeches &amp; Remarks</li><li>• Roll Call</li><li>• Appointments</li><li>• Previous Congress matters</li><li>• Reports</li><li>• Constitution Sessions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Resolution Sessions</li><li>• Voting</li><li>• Speeches of President's Candidates</li><li>• Election</li><li>• Finance &amp; Budget</li><li>• Announcements &amp; Other matters</li></ul>
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The International Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW International) is a registered organization in Switzerland. It has 3 main governance documents, namely Swiss Law, BPW International Constitution and Regulations and Procedure Manual. BPW International Constitution and Regulations can be amended at the General Assembly and Procedure Manual can be amended by the BPW International Board.

The Procedure Manual indicates that a *BPW International Congress* is where the General Assembly is convened<sup>1</sup> and that a *General Assembly* is held triennially at the International Congress at a time and a place to be fixed by the International Executive.<sup>2</sup> To set policy for the organization, resolutions can be proposed to be debated and voted on a General Assembly.

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<sup>1</sup> Procedure Manual Section 7: Congress

<sup>2</sup> Procedure Manual Section 8: General Assembly

International Congress provides a stage for BPW members to network, collaborate and gain recognitions on global stage. While the General Assembly offers opportunities to change policies and regulations, members enjoy the social events, plenary sessions and workshops.

This report reviews the feasibility of the Virtual XXX BPW International Congress with respect to the BPW International Constitution and Regulations and the Procedure Manual.

## 1.2 Organizing BPW International Congress

- International President and Executive Finance Officer are responsible for Congress Finances. No financial commitment regarding Congress finance can be made without their approval.
- BPW International Congress is organized by the International Planning Committee (IPC) with the assistance of the Host Planning Committee (HPC) of the country that was selected to host the Congress.
- IPC is chaired by the International President, according to the constitution.<sup>3</sup> Typically, the IPC would conduct the Congress site inspection, prepare the Congress program, identify speakers, prepare Congress publication, prepare General Assembly sessions, identify International sponsors, etc.
- Typically, HPC would assist in raising funds from local sponsors, in identifying possible service providers, suggest venues for social events and provide volunteers for various events.
- Division of responsibilities between IPC and HPC vary per congress basis. However, since HPC for the XXX Congress in Orlando, Florida, USA resigned in 2019, the IPC is the sole organizer of the XXX Congress.

See Appendix B for more details on Status of IPC and HPC of the XXX Congress.

## 1.3 Congress Dates

- Previous Date Restriction is no longer applied.

The original date of XXX BPW International Congress, 21-25 August 2020, were set by the contract between BPW International and the hotel, signed in September 2017 prior to Cairo Congress. The dates and venue were announced at the XXIX Congress, but there was no vote to approve them. Congress date restrictions were originally due to the penalty clause in the hotel contract, which is very high if BPW International would cancel or change Congress dates. However, as the hotel cancelled the event due to the pandemic, this restriction no longer applies.

- Period in between Congresses is not restricted to 36 months.

According the procedure manual, a **term** is the period between 2 consecutive General Assemblies.<sup>4</sup> Since 1996, the time gaps between Congresses are as follows:

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<sup>3</sup> Constitution and Regulations, R3.1, R9.2

<sup>4</sup> Procedure Manual, Definition, page 13

Congress	Date	A term duration
22 <sup>nd</sup> Congress in Venice	7-12 July 1996	36 months
23 <sup>rd</sup> Congress in Vancouver	19-25 Sept 1999	38 months
24 <sup>th</sup> Congress in Melbourne	3-9 Oct 2002	37 months
25 <sup>th</sup> Congress in Luzern	18-20 June 2005	33 months
26 <sup>th</sup> Congress in Mexico City	24-28 Oct 2008	40 months
27 <sup>th</sup> Congress in Helsinki	17-21 June 2011	32 months
28 <sup>th</sup> Congress in Jeju	23-27 May 2014	35 months
29 <sup>th</sup> Congress in Cairo	23-27 Oct 2017	41 months

## II BPW READINESS

### 2.1 Required Documents Readiness

Procedure Manual requires that key documents which impact decision making at Congress are distributed to the International Board at least 4 months before Congress. As of 17 June 2020 Nominations, Proposed Resolutions and Proposed Amendments were already distributed. The pending required documents are related to the XXIX Congress, namely:

- The XXIX Congress Proceedings: According to the Constitution, within 12 months of the Congress, the President and Executive Secretary from that term will circulate the agreed proceedings of the General Assembly to the International Board.<sup>5</sup> Immediate Past President requested for a deadline extension from the Executive Board and her request was granted. According to immediate past executive secretary, this proceeding is almost ready and it should be feasible to distribute it to the International Board by September 2020.
- The Audited XXIX Congress financial report According to the procedure manual, immediate past president has to *finalize the financial accounts from her term including the Congress accounts, with the Executive Finance Officer from her term, within twelve (12) months of the Congress*.<sup>6</sup> Congress financial handover should include *Audited report of Congress account from certified Auditor twelve (12) months after General Assembly, Congress proceeding and Congress Account*.<sup>7</sup> Congress deficit must also be reported.

This required Audited Financial Statement was originally due at the end of October 2018, but its deadline was extended in 2019 by the executive upon request of immediate past president. *As the XXIX Congress finance handover did not yet take place and the readiness of this Audited Congress Financial report is unknown*. It is crucial that any outstanding issues are addressed in order to finalize the Congress account. Congress Financial hand over should be complete and the Audited report should be available as soon as possible.

As the financial outcome of the previous congress impacts the budget for the XXX Congress as well as the budget for the next triennium, IPC recommended that the new date of the XXX Congress should be at least 4 months after the distribution of the Audited Financial report of the XXIX Congress.

For example, if this Audited Financial Statement can be distributed by 30 November 2020, then the recommended starting date for the XXX Congress is from 1 April 2021 onward, regardless of whether it is a physical or virtual congress.

<sup>5</sup> Constitution and Regulations R10.4

<sup>6</sup> Procedure Manual, Section 2.1

<sup>7</sup> Procedure Manual, Section 6.3.4

## 2.2 Preparedness of BPW Members

BPW members' readiness to meet online via webinar / Zoom is quite different from their readiness to fully participate in a Virtual General Assembly. Things get more complicated by the need to comply to Governance documents' requirements.

### 2.2.1 Members who can attend GA sessions

#### (i) Limit of total delegates for GA session

When virtual Congress is promoted by BPW members or affiliates, it is promoted that holding a Virtual General Assembly would open it to a much larger audience in BPW community. However, the total delegates for General Assembly, whether Virtual or Physical, are limited by Constitution R11.2 (see Table 1), given that an equal number specified can be accredited as alternate delegates. Therefore, the total participants for General Assembly is not likely to exceed 200 people.

**Table 1: BPW International Constitution R11 on General Assembly**

*R11.1 Only delegates from Affiliates which are up to date with their dues (and any penalties) can vote at the General Assembly.*

*R11.2. Delegates of Affiliate Federations attending General Assembly*

*Each Affiliate Federation attending the General Assembly is entitled to vote.*

*The number of voting delegates is:*

- 500 or fewer members 3
- 501 to 1,000 members 4
- 1,001 to 2,000 members 5
- 2,001 to 3,000 members 6 and 1 additional delegate for every extra 1 to 3,000 members to a maximum of 15 delegates.

*Each Federation is entitled to an equal number of alternate delegates.*

*R11.3. Delegates of Affiliate Clubs attending General Assembly*

*Each country with 1 or more Affiliate Clubs attending the General Assembly is entitled to 1 voting delegate and 1 alternate delegate. The 1 vote must be shared by the Affiliate Clubs.*

*R11.4. Other delegates attending General Assembly*

- *Members of the Executive are entitled to 1 vote and may vote only in that capacity.*
- *Past Presidents and Standing Committee Chairpersons are entitled to 1 vote and may vote only in one capacity*

#### (ii) BPW Affiliates must be up-to-date with their dues

Only BPW Affiliates that are up-to-date with their dues can nominate delegates to debate and vote at GA sessions. Common practices are these affiliates will bring cash to pay outstanding dues at Congress, which would then allow them to enable them participate, debate and vote at General Assembly / Congress. Unfortunately, they cannot do so prior to a Virtual XXX Congress.

This pandemic makes the problem worse because many countries are/were in a locked down, making international fund transfer difficult, if not impossible. As of 12 June 2020, 55% of BPW affiliates world-wide are not financial. Many of our federations or affiliate Clubs were not able to transfer their dues due to closed banks or heavy taxes and

additional fees. So, if the XXX Congress was held virtually at this time , then less than half of BPW Affiliates can attend Virtual GA sessions.

Feedback from BPW affiliates as of June 2020 show that 25 members countries are against Virtual Congress and 15 member countries favor and/or promote Virtual Congress. Four out of the 14 countries that favor Virtual Congress are not financial. Therefore, they were lobbying for Virtual General Assembly, which they cannot attend.

### **2.2.2 Internet Accessibilities**

The qualities of Internet connection and Wifi vary from one location to another. Electricity is not always reliable in some countries/locations. Thus, glitches can happen all the time that cause the loss of video, audio capabilities or the temporary loss of the connection altogether. Virtual meetings of corporation and international organizations faced these problems.

Also, many BPW members are not IT savvy and may find it difficult to fully participate in the sessions. While there are more BPW webinars this year via Zoom to help improve members ability to attend online meeting, we cannot declare that all executives of all BPW Affiliates now have equal ability to actively participate in Virtual Congress. *BPW affiliates with good internet connection, reliable electricity and IT savvy BPW executives still have better opportunities to participate at Virtual Congress and General Assembly than others.*

### **2.2.3 Time Zone Difference**

IBM top executive names time zone difference as one of the major challenges for organizing its Global Conference. Successful virtual conference has to design their program with respect to time zone. UN Global Compact conference, for example, segments sessions for specific regions.

When the virtual conference is held for one time zone and one language, it is possible to have thousands of people attend Virtual Conferences, with several parallel sessions, for a full day. But when the conference is conducted where the audiences are from varieties of time zones, it is more difficult to hold a long official meeting. When all delegates participate at Congress in the same time zone, it is possible to schedule Congress to be held from 8:00 am – 5:00 pm each day. Lunch breaks are also in the same time zone. With time zone differences in virtual global conference, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm in one country can become 8:00 pm – 5:00 am in another country. This makes scheduling of GA sessions a challenge.

*In the Virtual XXX Congress proposal, picking only 1-2 time zones for congress would discriminate against BPW members in other time zones.*

To be fair to all BPW Affiliates, BPW would have to rotate the time zones for different sessions of General Assembly. How to schedule Virtual GA sessions in a fair way is challenging. But when delegates in some regions would have to participate in the hours after midnight – 6:00 am, their full attendance is highly questionable.

Scheduling Virtual GA sessions for BPW so that every delegate can conveniently attend at the same time is very difficult. No matter which time we pick, it would favor some regions and discriminate against other regions. If the session is scheduled at European time 19:00 hrs (London), it will be suitable for members in Europe, North America (11:00 hrs in California), Africa (21:00 hrs in Egypt) and Latin America members (14:00 hrs in Ecuador). But in Asia, it will be after midnight (2:00 hrs in Thailand). Guideline on this matter should appear in governance documents as well.

## 2.3 BPW Governance Documents' Readiness

BPW General Assembly is not a simple meeting that can be handled virtually like a webinar, as it must comply to the Constitution and Regulations e.g. in R11 (see Table 1) as well as in the Procedure Manual in Section 8 (9 pages) and Swiss Civil Code.

As Congress was never held virtually, there is no provision for or against it in the current governance documents. While the executive may be able to improvise regarding the process to handle Virtual Congress,<sup>8</sup> it is crucial that such process will not open room for people to challenge voting results and nullify decisions made at a Virtual Congress.

Without an approved process, when challenges or disputes arise, there is no ground to settle the issues in a timely manner. Many things that are obvious face-to-face can become ambiguous virtually. For example,

- a. The 1<sup>st</sup> Vice president is supposed to chair the meeting if the president is not available to chair (this typically happens when the President presents her own report). But in a virtual GA session, the President may lose internet connection with the meeting for 5 minutes. Does that allow the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President to chair, call for vote, etc.?
- b. In voting real-time, the quality of the internet connection can cause problems.
  - (1) If poor quality wifi may cause the vote transmission delay. A person may cast the vote on time but the transmission of the vote arrives after the vote is closed. How would one deal with such a situation?
  - (2) If the internet connection is lost during the voting time, would she lost her vote for the candidate she voted for or the amendment she wanted to vote for?

Etc.

At very least, we would need governance documents' support to address virtual debates, quorum for Virtual General Assembly and online voting. As a Virtual Congress is a new territory for the BPW governance documents, the changes made must be regarded as acceptable by Swiss Law as well.

### 2.3.1 Addressing Virtual Debate

Beside resolutions and constitution amendments, there can still be a virtual debate on other matters at the GA session. There must be a ***Standing Order for Virtual GA sessions*** to address virtual debate that has been tested for practicality before it can be adopted at the first GA session of Congress. Some of many things that need to be made clear are listed below.

- ***Time limit:*** In a face-to-face Congress, people can line up to speak on either pros or cons microphones with time limit. People in the two queues take turns. There would be two minutes of virtual time. But if a speaker loses her internet connection when her turn comes and comes back after the debate is closed, can she still speak?
- ***Special roles*** such as parliamentarian, time keeper, etc. would they be authorized to have special rights like to turn off the microphone of those who speak past their time limit?

Etc.

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<sup>8</sup> Constitution R24.2 states that The Executive will decide matters that are not covered by the Constitution, Regulations or Procedure Manual. Executive decisions must be guided by the aims and be consistent with the nature of the Constitution and Regulations and the Procedure Manual.

### **2.3.2 *Addressing the Quorum of a Virtual General Assembly***

According to Constitution and Regulations R3.5, the quorum is one-third [1/3] of the voting representation at the General Assembly and one-quarter [1/4] of the Board members at a meeting of the International Board.

It is possible that the total of voting delegates is at the low end instead of the high end (the proposed Virtual XXX Congress estimated 800 participants, but most of them may be observers). Hypothetically, suppose paid registrants to attend Virtual GA include 60 voting delegates. Once 20 voting delegates already signed-in (1/3 of 60 delegates), the official voting could begin. It would take 14 or more delegates (2/3 majority) to approve a constitution amendment and 11 or more delegates (simple majority) to pass a resolution.

For an organization with over 100 member countries, would that be fair and democratic? As it does not seem so, the governance documents need to address this issue. It is highly recommended that a minimum of total number of countries or total number of regions for a Virtual General Assembly is added to BPW governance documents.

### **2.3.3 *Addressing Online Voting***

The Constitution, Regulations and Procedure Manual contain text to support electronic voting process of executive and of international board, but it does not provide rules to support online voting, debates for a BPW General Assembly.

Online real-time voting where some delegates are at the event and some are elsewhere is very close to Proxy voting. Proxy voting allows people who do not physically attend Congress to cast the vote. There were debates at several General Assemblies during many past BPW International congresses on allowing Proxy Voting, but Proxy Voting was NEVER approved.

A claim that proxy voting is now allowed as it is not forbidden in the Constitution and Regulations' document would be highly controversial. One cannot simply dismiss this historical fact and move on to conduct a Virtual GA meeting that allows online voting at the General Assembly. Currently there is no clause to support hybrid GA session where some people vote face-to-face and some people send in their votes while they are elsewhere.

Another problem is how would we deal with a situation when the votes are neck-to-neck and someone claims they lost internet connection so they cannot vote in time? To avoid endless challenges on voting results, a practical process for electronic debate and votes at Virtual GA sessions must be defined and approved by the appropriate authority before the Virtual GA begins.

## **III. TECHNOLOGICAL FEASIBILITY**

Technologies that support Virtual meeting and Virtual Conferences have been around for decades. In fact, if there is no budget and other governance constraints, just about anything can be implemented according to the specification, from a simple webinar tool to Virtual reality where the speaker can appear as a hologram and speak in non-native language.

This section discusses the required technical features and software platform. One of the common pitfalls is to underestimate the complexity in managing a Virtual Conference when one scales up from informal online meeting to a complex Virtual Congress.

### **3.1 *Required Features***

The software platform and additional software tools that BPW need should be capable of at least the following:

- Software platform to support virtual congress
  - Web conferences
  - Live events broadcast
  - Simultaneous Interpretation (English, French, Spanish, Italian)
  - Debate and vote in real time
  - Recording audio / video
- Polling / Voting system:
  - Secure web-based voting software platform and/or
  - Close (secret) vote & Open vote
- Easy to use user interface with full web / mobile access, document sharing, screen sharing, question and answer.
- Online Training to participate in Virtual Congress
- Sign in properly (name, BPW affiliates, voting right) for each session. One person may have different rights for each session.

### 3.2 Software Platforms

There are many Virtual Event Platforms, such as Zoom, WebEx, GoogleMeet, Kudo, etc.

**Zoom** is a popular choice for several online meetings and webinars. Many BPW members use zoom for their virtual seminars. Zoom has several package-offers that can support hundreds of participants at a very reasonable price. Non-GA sessions such as Regional Conferences, plenary sessions and workshops can be conducted via Zoom meeting. GA sessions and International Board meetings would be more complicated and need careful management. Zoom has many features that support requirements for a BPW Congress, such as simultaneous interpretation, session recording, etc. Additional feature can be supported by other software.

This section reviews which various aspects are required by the General Assembly / International Board and can or cannot be readily supported and which are the challenges in managing them.

#### 3.2.1 Manage Virtual Event Platform

*In a Virtual XXX Congress proposal, it was proposed that BPW volunteers would do the task of Professional Conference Organizer (PCO).*

While we are proud of our young BPW and IT savvy members, we must realize that Virtual BPW Congress / General Assembly are too complex to be managed by volunteers. Companies like IBM or Toshiba that have loads of technical staffs, would still hire highly qualify professional companies with years of experience in organizing virtual Global or National Conferences. Their executive realizes the complexity in managing virtual events.

What Virtual XXX Congress proposal refers to as PCO, we refer to as “*Professional Virtual Event Organizers*” in this paper. They are event professional companies with experience in virtual event technology. Professional Virtual Events Organizers can help ensure that an online meeting can be conducted more securely and run smoothly. These companies should help coordinate with speakers, provide technical support to help manage online sessions, fix problems if one arises, address security issues, such as unauthorized persons can hack in to participate in the online meeting. There are a lot of Virtual Events Organizers in the market, but a lot of these companies has less than one year experience.

To compare with the quote in the Virtual XXX Congress proposal, we request for quotes from Professional Virtual Event Organizers with experience of 4 or more years of experiences. As they organized hundreds of events / virtual events before, as they would already developed a software platform that can be integrated into platforms like Zoom to make things easier to use or manage. Please see Section 6 in the Financial Feasibilities section for more details.

### 3.2.2 **Manage Remote Simultaneous Interpretation**

BPW GA session and business sessions need to have simultaneous interpretation in the 4 official languages: English, Spanish, French and Italian. Zoom has Interpretation feature but its fee does not include interpreters. The creator of the conference appoint an interpreter, thereby creating an additional audio channels. Listeners can choose the audio channel (language) they want.

*In the Virtual XXX Congress proposal, it was proposed that 6 professional interpreters should handle this task (English-French, English-Spanish, English-Italian).*

However, there is more to this than meet the eyes.

Suppose the interpretation is from French-to-Spanish. Instead of having French-to-English translators, French is translated to English first, then English is translated into Spanish. It is consecutive rather than simultaneous. This is called “Relay Interpretation”. When there are delays because of internet connection with interpreters, the interpretation can stop and become too slow. Full simultaneous interpretation will require 2 interpreters per languages.

To improve the quality of relay interpretation, professional remote simultaneous interpretation (RSI) service providers have special equipment for relay interpretation to make it feel like simultaneous interpretation. Interpreters working as individuals would not have such equipment.

Zoom feature works well and has good sound quality, but it does not help coordinate the interpreters. Interpreters are responsible for their own equipment and Zoom does not provide the technical requirement for the interpreters’ workplace. Technical support is expected from the client side.<sup>9</sup> Professional simultaneous interpreters should have access to broadband connection and other professional equipment to provide quality service.

So to get quality Remote Simultaneous Interpretation (RSI) service, we requested for a quote from one of the service providers in Australia. See Section 5 on Financial Feasibilities and Appendix C for more details.

### 3.2.3 **Manage Sign-in**

*Confirmation of delegate identity is crucial as we must determine if someone is who she said she is and she has the right to vote.*

At the beginning of each General Assembly (GA) session and International Board meetings, participants must sign in to confirm their identity and their rights to vote.

- *In a face-to-face Congress*, sign in time is not a part of the session as we have to check delegates’ credentials and they have to pick up DigiVote machine outside the meeting room prior to GA sessions and International Board meetings
- *In a Virtual Congress*, however, people start to get online when they “sign in”. We need to use technology to help confirm each **Delegate’s identity and her roles** (to speak, debate, role, vote) when she signs in so that when we prepare a congress proceeding, we can indicate who put the motion, who seconded it, who plays various roles during GA session.

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<sup>9</sup> Natalya Fedorenkova, “6 platforms for remote simultaneous interpretation (RSI) and Zoom”, 11 April 2020

We also need to determine how much time is needed for sign-in for each session. The length of sign-in time per session depends on the total of people who can debate and can vote, not how many people can listen.

- a) Non-business sessions with 5-6 speakers can be conducted in webinar style and can begin once speakers and moderator sign-in. Participants join the session at the time of their convenience.
- b) For virtual GA sessions & International Board meetings, voting delegates, the following must be carefully managed:
  - o Join a virtual meeting
  - o Verify the identity of each voting delegate.
  - o Ensure that BPW clubs / Federations are up-to-date with their dues.
  - o Change online to show their real name, their BPW Club/Affiliate and Voting status.
  - o Make sure no one else can hack and attend as delegates or change their identity by changing their photo and name during the session.

Experiences showed that a small Online/Virtual meeting (less than 20 people), sign in time took about 10-30 minutes. Some of BPW Federations already did Virtual GA with over 70 delegates and it took almost one hour and a half to sign in.

But for a virtual GA session, the voting delegate can have about 200 delegates. Considering that they live in different time zones and may not have a secure and high speed Internet connection, nor reliable supply of electricity, it is estimated that at least 2 hours is needed to sign in 200 delegates prior to each Virtual General Assembly session.

In practice, people would not sign in 2 hours ahead of time. What is likely to happen is the sign-in time would be scheduled for 1 hour. But the virtual meeting starting time would be delayed for another hour because there are people who cannot sign-in properly (this may be due to their own problem with the internet connection). So if we hold 2.5 hours General Assembly sessions, we should allocate 4.5 hours per session. However, this would not change the number of days for GA sessions.

A software platform can be developed to help speed up the sign-in and identity confirmation process, but this requires time to develop.

Hand-on Training and test run can also help. We can have them try to attend a test GA session where they must stay in the waiting room of Zoom until their names are proper. We can expect the first few GA sessions to experience a longer sign-in time. Afterwards, the sign-in-time can be faster as people get used to the process.

### ***3.2.4 Manage Online Voting***

#### ***(i) Online Voting via Zoom***

*In the Virtual XXX Congress proposal, it was suggested that resolutions and constitution amendments be voted via Zoom.*

Zoom poll can be conducted anonymously (close vote) or the names can be identified (open vote). Host or co-host can launch polls but they cannot participate (which means the Chair of GA session cannot be the host). All participants in the Zoom meeting, including the panelists, can participate.

But if the aim is to increase participation in the General Assembly, using Zoom polling would be counter-productive.

- Need to exclude observers from GA sessions. In the physical congress, BPW allows observers as well as voting delegates to attend the GA sessions. Observers cannot vote. But Zoom meeting would allow all participants in the room to participate in a poll. This is easily fixed by not allowing the observers in the room, but this means the claim that more BPW members can participate in Virtual GA sessions is not true.
- Not all accredited voting delegates can attend. Constitution R11.2 and R11.3 allows alternate delegates can also attend GA session. For example, if a Federation has 3 voting rights, they can accredit 6 people (3 delegates plus 3 alternate delegates). In a face-to-face Congress, even when all 6 are attending the same GA session, they will have only 3 digi-vote machines to cast 3 votes. All 6 can participate in a debate. But if we use poll in Zoom to vote in real-time, then only 3 of them can attend the same session to debate and vote.
- Voting Strength: Problems of the loss of the internet connection or delegate experiencing other technical glitches during the voting time can lead to dynamic changes in voting strength.
- Security: The security issue where a Virtual meeting can be hacked presents a problem. What if someone hacks in and casts a vote? Can we tell? Government agencies in some countries would not to use Zoom for their official business meetings due to security issues. Some of these issues are listed in <https://techxplore.com/news/2020-05-zoom-security-here-what-you.html>.

#### **(ii) Secure Web-based voting:**

Online voting in between Congress for International Board is supported in the Procedure Manual.<sup>10</sup> Secure Web-based voting was used in the BPW selection process of nominee for Asia-Pacific Regional Coordinator in 2019. BPW Affiliates that are financial with international dues submitted credential forms with name and email of the designated persons who will serve as voting delegates. These voting delegates would receive her own unique login and password via email to securely login to vote in the secure voting platform. The voting platform allows each delegate to vote only once. To address time zone issue, voting delegates had 53.5 hours to cast the votes in September 2019.

*The Virtual XXX Congress proposal suggests the use of web-based voting InVoteNow for the election and to approve the budget for the next triennium, allowing 48 hours to vote. InVoteNow is the secure online voting from Civici, a Scytl company. According to company profile, Scytl products were used in 40 countries, including Switzerland.*

InVoteNow offers high security at a high price. The first batch of votes would cost US\$ 4,761 for election of 11 positions. The second batch would cost US\$ 4,162. We assume this would be needed for the vote for additional 9 Chairs of the Standing Committees.

However, we were curious why the Virtual XXX Congress proposal only proposed for election and budget, but proposed that the resolutions and constitution amendments would be handled as real time voting? Is price the only reason? Does it have to do with the fact that elections do not have to require debates? In the profile of Scytl, Scytl's products are used within Switzerland.

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<sup>10</sup> Procedure manual 1.3.1, p. 7

The projects for Switzerland in Scylt's profile promote online voting among Swiss Citizen. We did not see Switzerland's projects that cover global time zone.

### ***(iii) Selecting Voting Platform:***

There are multiple service providers for secure online voting. Some just use login and password, some have additional security like sending OTP-SMS (send authorization code via SMS) to reconfirm the vote (See Quote 2 in Appendix C which already includes this feature).

Whether BPW would use real time voting or web-based voting, BPW International must double check with Swiss law first whether or not such process is legal.

***BPW International should not vote online first and check the law later. Unless the vote result is unanimous, there are always people who do not like voting result. If the voting process is in violation of Swiss law, they can use this loophole to nullify the vote results and demand for revote. Unfortunately, if this happens, it may not nullify just one vote result that is being challenged, but all the votes that follow the same voting process.***

### **3.2.5 Recording Audio / Video & Transcription**

All the business sessions of Congress, including international board meetings and General Assemblies must be recorded / documented in such ways that it can be used to prepare Congress proceedings. Technical aspects of *simultaneous Interpretation, Confirmation of delegate's identity, Congress recording and Transcription* would impact the proceedings' preparation process.

- Confirmation of delegates identity was addressed in Section 3.2.3
- Audio and video recording is supported by Zoom with additional fee payment.

The issue is with **Transcription**.

- Manual transcription is expensive. It costs about US\$10,000 for XXIX Congress.
- *The Virtual XXX Congress proposal suggests that transcription is done at the rate of US\$5 per hour per language.* At this rate, we assume that it refers to auto-transcription.
- **Auto transcription** is based on speech-to-text technology, which has been around for decades. We use this technology in every day life as we can now talk to our smart phone to type things up for us. Often, the text is not always correct, especially when the users are non-English speakers.

Auto transcription quality depends on the accuracy rate of its speech-to-text software. For native English speakers, the accuracy may be over 90% but for non-native English speakers, the accuracy can drop as far as 50%-60%.<sup>11</sup> Just to get some idea, if we have 95% accuracy that would mean in transcribing 100,000 words, about 5,000 words would be wrong. As BPW has many members who are non-native English speakers, would that be acceptable?

Until we thoroughly test the system in the context of BPW, IPC would not advise to jump into conclusion that BPW can rely entirely auto-transcription for preparation of Congress proceedings. Realistically, human intervention is still needed for this task.

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<sup>11</sup> The estimate comes from the Director of the National Electronic and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC), in Thailand whose expertise is in Natural language processing.

## IV TIME FEASIBILITIES

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This section explores two things: Congress Duration and Congress Preparation Time.

### 4.1 Congress Duration

Congress duration for physical congress runs about 4-5 days. For Virtual Congress, we would need more time, as people would be too tired to attend long consecutive business sessions. This section explore how long it would take to run a Virtual XXX Congress.

#### 4.1.1 Session Duration

People have limited attention span. To respect the attention span of people is one of the critical success factors for organizing a conference. If the session is too long in a physical meeting, people may leave the room, fall asleep or pay attention to their phone instead. If the session runs too long in a virtual meeting, people can turn off their audio/video, leave the screen on and go do something else.

As a guideline time per session of plenary session, workshops and business sessions should not exceed 2.5 hours, though 1.5 hours per session is more common for plenary sessions and workshops. Another rule of thumb is when it is a virtual meeting, schedule the time should allow to be 1.5 time the duration of the physical meeting time. Successful virtual international conferences such as Think Tank for G-20 (T-20) and Business Network International (BNI), divided up their virtual meetings into several days with short sessions per day.

#### 4.1.2 Time for Non-General Assembly Sessions

Various Non-General Assembly session / events are listed in Table 2. We estimate 17 days, with maximum of 2 hours session per day. A sign-in time of 1 hour is added if it is not a webinar style. This already scales down from physical congress, but the total workshops and plenary sessions can easily be adjusted further if needed.

Note that the Virtual XXX Congress proposal mentions some of non-GA sessions but excludes them from the estimated 22 hours in 11 days for Congress.

**Table 2: Time for Virtual Non-GA sessions**

Tasks / Sessions	Time estimate for Virtual meeting	
<i>Non-GA sessions</i>	Days	Hours
(1) Regional Conferences (5 conferences)	5 day	15 hours (2 hours meeting + 1 hour sign-in)
(2) Congress Orientation Workshop	1 day	2 hours
(3) Resolutions Workshop	1 day	2 hours
(4) Constitution Amendments Workshop	1 day	2 hours
(5) International Board meetings	2 days	6 hours (2 hours meetings +1 hour sign-in each)
(6) Opening & Closing Ceremony	2 days	3 hours (1.5 hours each)
(7) Plenary sessions	2 day	4 hours
(8) Workshops (3 workshops per day)	2 days	6 hours (@ 2 hours each)
(9) Award Ceremony	1 day	1 hour
<b>Total days with non-GA sessions</b>	<b>17 days</b>	

#### 4.1.3 Times for GA Session

##### (a) Workload

Workload plays an important role in determining the time required for the General Assembly sessions. Workload is dominated by total number of proposed resolutions and proposed constitution amendments. However, time for GA has to account for more things than that.

Time for General Assembly sessions for XXX Congress must account for the following:

- Reports and 1st GA session matter  
(such as appointing parliamentarian, time keeper, etc.)
- Debates and Vote on 25 Constitution Amendments
- Debates and Vote on 17 proposed Resolutions
- Reviewing vote results
- Elections for 20 positions
- Budget and other matters

##### (b) Estimating time for GA sessions

*The Virtual XXX Congress proposal references 11.5 hours GA session time from XXIX Congress to estimate that 22 hours for Virtual GA sessions is adequate of the Virtual XXX Congress. The calculation process is not explained.*

When the program for XXIX Congress in Cairo was designed, the International Congress Coordinator<sup>12</sup> took workload into account. The workload then included 22 decisions<sup>13</sup> and least 11 votes for election (executive board positions only). Details is shown in Table 3.

The duration of GA sessions was estimated by assuming that it would take 20 minutes for each debate & 3 minutes vote for at about 3 minutes each. So the minimum time was 9 hours, leaving 2.5 hours for reports, debates, elections and votes on other matters. Clearly for XXIX Congress, 11.5 hours was adequate to cover 9 hours GA sessions.

To estimate the time for XXX Congress, we need to reference the XXIX Congress in the same way. As shown in Table 3, the workload for XXX Congress is at least 66 decisions, more than double that of XXIX Congress. the estimate time for physical GA session at XXX Congress would be 1,118 minutes or about 18.3 hours.

**Table 3: Compare Workload at Physical General Assembly of XXIX Congress vs. XXX Congress**

	XXIX Congress	XXX Congress
Proposed Constitution Amendments	11	25
Proposed Resolutions	7	17
Election of Executives	11	11
Election of Standing Committee Chairs	N/A	9
Estimate minimum other debates & votes	4	4
# debates from amendments and resolutions	<b>22</b>	<b>46</b>
# of votes for amendments, resolutions, election	<b>29</b>	<b>66</b>
Face-to-Face Estimated time for debates (20 min.each)	440 minutes	920 minutes
Face-to-face Estimated time for votes (3 min. each)	87 minutes	198 minutes
Total face-to-face est. time to debate & vote	527 minutes (9 hours)	1,118 minutes (18.3 hours)

<sup>12</sup> Cairo Congress program was designed by Dr. Chonchanok in her role as International Congress coordinator.

<sup>13</sup> 22 decisions consisted of 11 proposed constitution amendments, 7 proposed resolutions, previous congress proceedings, next triennium budget and estimated 2 motions to amend proposed amendments/resolutions.

Note that if it is held virtually, we can still limit the debate to 20 minutes each but the voting would take more time, taking into account unreliable electricity, poor internet connection and other technical glitches. So at least 10 minutes should be allowed for real time voting.<sup>14</sup>

The minimum time required for GA sessions of the XXX Congress, without reports and debates on other matters, is at least as follows:

- (a) Face-to-face GA sessions need at least 1,118 minutes or 18.3 hours or seven 2.5 hours sessions.
- (b) Virtual GA sessions need at least 1,580 minutes or 26.3 hours or eleven 2.5 hours session. In this part we are in agreement with the Virtual XXX Congress proposal.

However, we have to add back in the estimate time for reports and handling other matters. Table 4 shows time for Virtual General Assembly of XXX Congress would take 13 days for virtual meeting time and 2 days to do election via web-based voting.

**Table 4: Estimated number of Virtual General Assembly for XXX Congress**

<b>General Assembly Sessions</b>	<b>Days</b>	<b>Hours</b>
(1) Reports & 1st GA session matters	2 days	9 hours (2 sessions @ 4.5 hours)
(2) Constitution Amendments (25 amendments)	6 days	45 hours
(3) Resolutions (17 resolutions)	4 days	(10 sessions @ 4.5 hour)
(4) Election		Web-based voting 48 hrs
(5) Budget and other matters	1 day	4.5 hours
<b>Total time for Virtual GA sessions</b>	<b>13 days</b>	

In fact, it is crucial to point out that total number of days are subjected to further uncertainty.

- Report of the voting strength: This is the total number of eligible voting delegates in the room at that time right before voting, presented by Credential Chair at Congress.
- Determine if GA session has a quorum: The quorum is one-third [1/3] of the voting representation at the General Assembly.<sup>15</sup> For example, if 180 people registered as voting delegates, 60 people must be in the room to allow for voting.
- Handling special circumstance: There can be people who want to amend the resolutions and the proposed amendments and additional votes may be needed. This will require extra time. If there is a tie in an election, the International President can vote to break the tie.<sup>16</sup> That, too, takes time.

For a *face-to-face congress*, if someone leaves the GA sessions, they have to sign out. The Credential chair has to be able to control constantly who is present and who is not in order to announce the changes in the voting strength. GA session sometime has to lock the doors so no delegate can leave, in order to keep voting strength unchanged and to maintain that the session has the quorum.

**For virtual congress, the dynamically changing voting strength due to the loss in internet connection or technical glitches can affect the duration of XXX Congress in many ways.**

<sup>14</sup> Some universities in Thailand even allow 15 minutes to the students to submit their exam papers online.

<sup>15</sup> According to Constitution and Regulations R3.5, the quorum is one-third [1/3] of the voting representation at the General Assembly and one-quarter [1/4] of the Board members at a meeting of the International Board.

<sup>16</sup> Procedure Manual 2.1, p.10

- (a) GA session cannot begin until there is a quorum. This can cause the Virtual GA sessions to be delayed or cancelled when it happens.
- (b) During a virtual GA session, if the voting strength drops and GA sessions no longer have a quorum, then the GA session cannot continue to vote until the quorum was re-established again.
- (c) The vote result can be challenged, if the total vote counts contradict with the reported voting strength prior to voting or if someone claims they lost internet connection during the voting time. This may require a re-vote, which takes time. In a worst case scenario, settling the challenge could take months.

#### 4.1.4 Estimated times for Virtual XXX Congress

**Total Estimated total Days for XXX Virtual Congress is 30 days**

This is 6 times longer than 5 days for face-to-face Congress. As holding a virtual congress 30 days consecutively is not possible, the duration of a Virtual XXX Congress would be at least 2 months.

#### 4.2 Congress Preparation Time

At a first glance, people may assume that the preparation process for a Virtual General Assembly and Virtual Congress is a quick and easy process. Unlike a simple change of Congress venue and date that BPW International Executive can decide upon, the change to a Virtual Congress is a change of the process to organize a Congress. Table 5 lists out XXX Congress preparation tasks. The specific part to a Virtual XXX Congress is explained in more details below.

**Table 5: Estimate Virtual XXX Congress preparation**

<b>Prepare Virtual XXX Congress</b>	
1	Review feasibilities of a Virtual XXX Congress
2	If feasible, set up taskforce to prepare Virtual Congress Process
3	Open bids for service providers / select platform
4	Test practicality of proposed steps
5	Get the proposed process approved by authority *
6	Sign contracts with service providers (if needed to)
7	Training to prepare for managing and participating in Virtual Congress
<b>Other Preparation for XXX Congress</b>	
8	Prepare online registration for Virtual Congress
9	International Board vote to ratify Post-XXIX Congress Procedure Manual
10	Distribute XXIX Congress Proceedings to the International Board **
11	Finalize congress finance handover
12	Distribute the audit for XXIX Congress Financial account to the International Board **
13	Congress Registration
14	Congress Promotion
15	Finding sponsors
16	Prepare Congress program
17	Prepare XXX Congress program book & workbook
18	Accredit delegates for International Board & GA sessions
19	Distribute PDF files of XXX Congress publication

\* **Proper authority** may refer to Executive Board, International Board and/or legal body that can confirm compliance with Swiss law. If procedure manual amendment is required, see procedure manual 14.1.1

\*\* This should be complete at least 4 months before the beginning of XXX Congress

Whether or not Congress is held virtually or face-to-face, it would take several months to prepare. It cannot be ready at moment notice.

In conclusion, to do things properly, the time to prepare for a Virtual XXX BPW International Congress may not be that much different from the time to reschedule a physical XXX BPW International Congress. However, a physical XXX Congress will take 5 days but a Virtual XXX Congress will take up to 2 months.

## **V. FINANCIAL FEASIBILITIES**

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There is an underlying assumption that a Virtual XXX Congress would be more cost effective than a physical Congress. While the figures may not be exact, this section analysis if a Virtual Congress can be profitable.

### **5.1 Would a Virtual Congress' income cover expenses?**

*The Virtual XXX Congress proposal estimated the income from a Virtual XXX Congress to be \$20,000 from either US\$250 x 80 affiliates or US\$25 for 800 participants. The estimated expenses would be \$12,342 and concludes that a Virtual XXX Congress will yield profit of \$7,658.*

As there are no enjoyable social events, face-to-face networking, meals, no plenary session, no workshop, and no award ceremony, a Virtual Congress would be regarded as just work rather than networking and pleasure. But it is uncertain if BPW can hit the mark of US\$ 20,000 registration income.

But the real problem is even if a Virtual XXX Congress costs nothing and we can really hit registration income mark of \$ 20,000, the income would still not cover the XXX Congress expense.

The XXX Congress expenses began since the last triennium in 2017 when BPW International transferred \$10,000 deposit for the hotel. Congress accounting would cost \$5,000 and Congress Audit would cost US\$ 5,000. With these three expense items, the income of \$ 20,000 will be already spent.

After adding the expenses of a Virtual XXX Congress, other pre-Congress expenses (such as developing on-line registration, prepare congress workbook, credit card processing fees) and post-Congress expenses (such as transcription, preparing congress proceedings), the expenditure would guaranteed to be over the total income from registration.

### **5.2 How much would a Virtual XXX Congress cost?**

*The Virtual XXX Congress proposal estimated expenses of \$12,342, which would cover a Zoom platform, a web-based voting platform for election, voting and budget, transcription and simultaneous interpretation*

As this is not yet a comprehensive list of expense items, we acquired quotes from Professional Technical Companies with experiences in organizing hundreds of events, including global and regional international virtual conferences. These quotes are based on technical and time requirement mentioned in Section 3 and 4. We acquired as well additional quotes from a professional Remote Simultaneous Interpreters' company. The comparison of these quotes and the proposed expenditure appears in Appendix C.

All of them include Virtual Event Platform. However, each quote still has features that are not included in the other one. Therefore, one cannot compare them directly. To compare them, we adjust their proposed to base on the same specification, as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6: Virtual XXX Congress Estimated expense,  
adjusted with the secure online voting platform and professional RSI**

	<i>Quote 1</i>	<i>Quote 2</i>	<i>Quote 3</i>	<i>Average</i>
<b><i>Original Description</i></b>	Manage by BPW volunteers only.  Cover GA session only. Give quote for 6 individual interpreters without professional technical support and coordination, vote via Zoom poll for resolutions and amendments. Use secure web-based for voting on election and budget only.	Manage by Professional Virtual Event Organizer with over 4 years of experience.  Cover full congress, exclude RSI.  All votes are on secure, web-based voting platform  Also offer branding and marketing support.	Manage by Professional Virtual Event Organizer with over 4 years of experience.  Cover full congress. Give quote for 4 interpreters without professional technical support and coordination. All votes are on secure web-based voting platform	
<b>Adjusted for GA session only</b>	\$124,366	\$101,234	\$105,315	\$110,305
<b>Adjusted for Full Congress</b>	\$159,988	\$136,856	\$140,937	\$145,927

Details about the adjustments in Table 6 are as follows:

**1) Remote Simultaneous Interpretation (RSI)**

Choice of remote simultaneous interpretation service makes a huge difference to the expense.

To do the interpretation from French to Italian, for example, it would have to be interpreted from French to English then from English to Italian. Add on top of that, there would be a delay in sound transmission over the internet. This may make it difficult to follow the conversation.

To make relay interpretation feel more like simultaneous interpretation would require special equipment from professional support. It impacts the quality of interpretation and the delay from interpretation and from internet connection. (See Section 3.2.2 for more details). More interpreters and coordination are also needed.

If we use quote 4 as point of reference for professional RSI fee which includes 8 interpreters, technical equipment, remote support, remote interpretation platform fee, interpreter management fee which are US\$ 5,936.9 per day, the additional fee adjustments are for

\$ 77,179 for 13 days of GA session  
\$ 178,107 for 30 days of full Congress

There are many other RSI platforms available such as KUDO, INTERPREFY, VOICEBOXE, INTECTIO, SPEAKUS and VERSPEAK. We do not have time to explore all of them to compare the price, but we can indicate that RSI is one of the biggest expense items for organizing a Virtual Congress.

## 2) Online Voting Platform

- If all votes are required to be done via *secure web-based online voting*, then we would need to add a fee per batch of vote for Quote 1. Quote 2 and Quote 3 do not need to be adjusted as the secure voting platform is allowed to be used for all the votes already.

To use a secure online voting platform after the debate, the delegates who hear the debate should be the ones who vote, not just any voting delegates. So, the number of batches would have to be equal to the total number of GA sessions. If we add 10 more batches of resolutions and amendments to Quote 1. ***The additional fee of over \$41,600 may apply.***

- If all votes are required to be *real-time voting via Zoom Poll*. Then the price would need to be adjusted down for all three quotes.

## 3) GA sessions only vs Full Congress

As Quote 1 is for GA sessions only and Quote 2 and Quote 3 include non-GA sessions, then we would also need to adjust prices if all cover full congress and/or if all cover only GA sessions in order to make the comparison.

The point of Table 6 is not to compare bids of 3 quotes, but to illustrate the following:

- ***The cost to organize a Virtual XXX Congress is not cheap.*** It can reach over US\$100,000 if we want professional quality, a secure platform with technical support.
- Remote Simultaneous Interpretation (RSI) platform is the biggest variable in computing the expense of Virtual Congress

## 5.3 Bottom line of a Virtual XXX Congress financial feasibility

When taken into account that the GA sessions which require remote simultaneous interpretation in 4 official languages and the technical support required to manage a Virtual Congress with the current workload to debate and vote on 25 Constitutional Amendments, 17 Resolutions, 20 Elections (triple the workload of the previous congress), ***a Virtual Congress would take too long and make the cost quite high.*** Under the current circumstances, we would expect that a Virtual XXX Congress would yield a Huge DEFICIT.

## VI. POSSIBLE WAYS FORWARD

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In this paper we review the feasibility of Virtual XXX Congress, not the feasibility of holding a Virtual conference for BPW in general. The XXX Congress is under unique circumstances and subject to many requirements.

Advance technology, especially Virtual Event Platforms, are here to stay. Whether or not it is suitable for a Virtual XXX Congress under the current circumstances of BPW, it is still a very powerful tool that BPW should use to advance the communication in our international network and enhance BPW events such as webinars, local events, national and regional conferences.

There was a suggestion for BPW to hold Executive Election in 2020 and process other matters in 2021 General Assembly. It must be noted that common practice is the election comes on the last day of the General Assembly at Congress. Also, if the election is held in year 2020 and the new president insists on taking office in 2020, then her term and new executive term would end in 2021, once the face-

to-face General Assembly is held. This is because a term in the constitution is defined as a period in between two General Assemblies. Certainly, this would not be desirable to the new executive.

To move forward, our Golden Rules are as follows:

- Make sure it is **LEGAL**
- Make sure it is **FAIR** for BPW members
- Make sure the consequences are acceptable
- Make sure it is feasible by time, finance and technology

Our recommendations are to do the following:

### **1. Scale down the Workload of Congress**

Past international congresses faced situations when they ran out of time before. When Congress runs out of time to process resolutions, one solution is to ask first if everyone agrees to vote on certain resolutions without debate. If it is unanimous, then the vote takes place without debate. Usually, when external resolutions address policy on how BPW can work together on something for the betterment of the world, voting delegates would unanimously approve them.

To reduce Congress workload, we can survey with international board and identify resolutions that no one objects ahead of time and schedule to vote on them without debate during XXX Congress.

It would be difficult to ask proposers of resolutions and/or constitution amendment to withdraw their submission. It is better, however, to submit a future procedure amendment to set a limit on how many resolutions and amendments one person or one BPW affiliate can submit for each Congress.

### **2. Use technology to further reduce time**

Executives have to submit their reports in text format in the BPW Congress Workbook. They could tape a short video presentation to be broadcasted on the internet. Instead of simultaneous interpretation, we could add caption (in 4 official languages) to the video so that the audience can read what the executive says in the selected language. However, the report still has to be moved and voted to be adopted during GA sessions.

### **3. Decide on how Congress will be organized**

Once the workload the time are substantially reduced, follow the golden rules in the process of deciding if XXX Congress would be held Virtually, Physically or Hybrid.

Hybrid Congress that IPC recommended is in the context of broadcast for people to view Live Sessions. Some technologies mentioned in this paper, such as RSI, can be used to help reduce cost of congress as the onsite Simultaneous interpretation can be used also for Participants with access to internet. We do not yet recommend hybrid congress with proxy-like voting as legality of this must be checked first.

If it is decided that the XXX BPW International will still be held as face-to-face Congress, the new venue with new date must be selected with Number 1 priority on safety. After such selection, a HPC will again be re-established in the selected country.

In preparing the analysis for this paper, IPC reviewed several organizations on how they respond to COVID-19. It is wise to learn from various organizations to see what their choices are and what challenges they encounter. However, it is naïve to jump into adopting another organization's approach. Different organizations have different resources, culture, constitution, regulations and different restrictions and different types of members. The pre-existing situation of BPW as mentioned earlier, is unique.

IPC would like to thank RC Dawne Williams for submitting her Virtual Congress Proposal. A Virtual Conference in one country and/or in similar time zones does help to keep BPW connected during the pandemic. While scaling up Virtual Meetings into a Virtual Congress has many challenges to overcome, lessons learned from debating this proposal of Virtual XXX Congress and the studies conducted for this paper can help reduce the cost and time in managing a future BPW Congress.

**Report prepared by**

**Past International President, Dr. Chonchanok Viravan**

**In collaboration with**

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Executive Financial Officer Dr. Giuseppina Seidita  
Asia-Pacific Regional Coordinator Dr. Narudee Kiengsiri

## APPENDIX A: Basic structure of events at / around congress

Tasks / Sessions	Description
a) Executive Board Meeting	Two executive board meetings are held: One before congress and one after congress.
b) Registration	BPW members register for Congress. They must belong to BPW affiliates, which have paid their dues and penalties to attend. Specific group of participants are voting delegates.
c) Regional Conferences	5 Regional Conferences are held in parallel before Congress
d) Congress Orientation	Workshop to brief participants about Congress
e) Resolutions Workshop	Briefing about Resolutions proposed
f) Constitution Amendments Workshop	Briefing about proposed Constitutional Amendments
g) International Board Meeting	Two International Board meetings are held: Pre-Congress and Post-Congress. Procedure Manual Amendments, abrogation, etc. are typically vote on.
h) Opening Ceremony	Include opening speech, entertainment, award ceremonies
i) Plenary Sessions	There are typically 1-2 plenary sessions per day during Congress.
j) Workshops	Total workshops vary, but typically there are 3 parallel workshops, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, total of 6 workshops (not overlap with plenary session but may overlap with GA sessions)
k) General Assembly	General Assembly requires simultaneous interpretation in 4 official languages: English, Spanish, French and Italian. There can be many GA sessions, but prior to each session, participants must sign in either as voting delegates and observers. Total vote per country is determined by total paid members.
3 Speeches & Remarks	This is done at first GA session only. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening Remarks</li> <li>• BPW International Collect</li> <li>• Minute of silence - Memorial</li> <li>• Apologies and Greeting Messages</li> <li>• Adoption of Standing Orders</li> <li>• Adoption of Program</li> </ul>
4 Roll Call	This is done at first GA session only.
5 Appointments	Appointments of GA Officials and Committees
6 Previous Congress matters	Adoption of previous Congress Proceeding, question and answer. Voting is required.

7 Reports	Reports of Executives, Immediate Past President, Standing Committee Chairs, etc.
8 Constitution Session	Proposer makes presentation, follow by the debates on pros and cons and then vote.
9 Resolution Session	Proposer makes presentation, follow by the debates on pros and cons and then the vote.
10 Voting	All votes during GA must be held as close vote (secret vote).
11 Speeches of President's Candidates	Short speech by candidates for International Presidents
12 Election	The election is in the following order: (1) International Presidents are elected first. (2) Next day, election can be held for other posts
13 Finance & Budget	Discussion on BPW finance and approval of Budget for the next triennium
14 Announcements & Other matters	
l) Award Ceremonies	Typically held both during opening ceremony and during Gala dinner.
m) Social events	President's Reception Gala Dinner Farewell party Friends and Fellow dinner Young BPW's Girls Night out Young BPW's Breakfast with International President  Optionally, there is also Mayor's Reception prior to Congress.

## APPENDIX B: Status of IPC and HPC of the XXX BPW International Congress

### B.1 International Planning Committee Status

The names of IPC members were presented to the Executive at the executive board meeting in New York in March 11, 2019 and received no objection. IPC currently held 2 Congress site-inspections in Orlando and two face-to-face meetings in Egypt and in Orlando.

(a) The First IPC Meeting and Congress Site Inspection and meeting in Orlando, Florida  
18-19 March 2019

The IPC conducted the first Congress site inspection in Orlando and met with a team from the hotel. Attendees include: President Amany Asfour, Vice President Catherine Bosshart, Executive Finance Office Giuseppina Seidita and North America and the Caribbean Regional Coordinator Dawne Williams. The IPC noticed that the event manager, Frédéric Larue had left Hilton Buena Vista, Orlando. He had been replaced by Samantha Seubert. All the discussions President Amany and PIP Chonchanok had had with Mr. Larue after the Regional Conference of North-America and the Caribbean in July 2018 had been lost. Mr. Larue left no trace of the meeting or follow-up. The Hotel facilities were reviewed. The IPC tried to reduce in vain the high amount of rooms for which BPW International would be held responsible in case not enough members would show-up and the hotel would not be able to sell the rooms to other people.

(b) The Second IPC meeting  
Sham El-Sheikh, Egypt, 25-27 October 2019

The attendees included President Amany Asfour, Vice President Catherine Bosshart, Executive Finance Office Giuseppina Seidita and Past International President. Chonchanok Viravan. Asia-Pacific Regional Coordinator Narudee Kiengsiri also attended to contribute legal advice to the IPC since she has a law degree and has 3 decades of experience in organizing International Conferences. During this meeting the Congress program, the Congress finances, the Congress logo, Congress Marketing materials, Congress web site and social events were discussed and prepared.

(c) The Third IPC meeting & Second Congress Site inspection  
Orlando, Florida, USA from 2-4 March 2020.

The attendees included President Amany Asfour, Vice President Catherine Bosshart and Past International President Chonchanok Viravan. Finance Officer Giuseppina Seidita made it up to Rome and could then not leave Italy due to COVID-19. Narudee Kiengsiri was ill and could not travel. During the meeting the IPC revised the specifications for the meeting rooms, the meals and decided on the locations for the Friends and Fellow Dinner, the Young BPW evening and the Farewell Dinner.

Although Regional Coordinator Dawne withdrew from the IPC when she declined to attend this 2<sup>nd</sup> IPC meeting and informed the IPC to continue without her, she later contributed in her own capacity with the Virtual XXX Congress proposal, which is under this feasibilities review.

Up to now, IPC continues to work together via Zoom meeting and other channels in order to prepare for this report.

## **B.2 Host Planning Committee Status**

The first chair of the Host Planning Committee for Orlando Congress was Past International President Liz Benham, who in the previous two years negotiated the contract between the hotel and BPW International.

However, on August 2, 2018, Past International President Elizabeth Benham resigned as Chair of the HPC. Later on the same day, NFBPWC USA sent a letter to inform BPW International that NFBPWC Federation must withdraw as Host Planning Committee. This is due to miscommunication regarding the congress site inspection.

In 2019, collaboration between NFBPWC USA and BPW International was reestablished. President Amany was renegotiating the contract to change the Congress dates with the hotel. During that time, she requested NFBPWC to pause the promotion of hotel booking for Congress. Over the issue regarding the uncertain Congress dates, BPW International received another letter on September 10, 2019 indicating that NFBPWC USA Federation would withdraw as the Host Planning Committee for the XXX Congress.

As the Hotel canceled the Congress in Orlando due to COVID-19, there is the decision pending on how the XXX Congress will be organized.

- If it is decided that the XXX BPW International Congress becomes a Virtual Congress, then there would be no host country as the event is held over the internet.
- If it is decided that the XXX BPW International will still be held as face-to-face Congress, the new venue with a new date must be selected with number one priority on safety. After such selection, an HPC will again be re-established in the selected country.

## APPENDIX C: Compare Price Quotes For Virtual XXX Congress

		Quote 1	Quote 2	Quote 3	Quote 4		
<b>I Virtual Event Platform</b>							
<b>1.1</b>	<b>Zoom Package</b>	\$270 /user/month	Include	Include	Not Applicable for Remote Service Interpretation (RSI) Provider		
1.1.1	Total hosts	10	not specified	10			
1.1.2	Max participants	800	1,000	800			
1.1.3	Total months	2	2	2			
1.1.4	Total Non-GA session days	1	17 days	17 days			
	• Regional Conferences		Included	Included			
	• 2 International Board Meetings						
	• Workshops on Orientation, resolutions and Constitution Amendments.						
	• Opening & Closing Ceremony						
	• Plenary Sessions						
	• Workshops						
	• Award Ceremony						
1.1.5	Total GA session days	11	13	13			
	Estimate hours	22	37	37			
	Reports and 1st GA matters	Included	Included	Included			
	25 Constitution Amendments	Zoom poll for voting	Web-based voting	Web-based voting			
	17 Resolutions						
	Election for 20 positions						
	Budget and other matters	Web-based voting					
1.1.6	Session Recording	Via Zoom	Via Zoom	Via Zoom			
<b>1.2</b>	<b>Secure Web-based Voting Platform</b>						
1.2.1	For 1st round of vote **	\$4,761	\$9,425 for all voting needs. Use OTP SMS to verify.	Included			
1.2.2	For 2nd round of vote (not include in total price)	\$4,162					
1.2.3	For additional round of votes	Not specified					
<b>1.3</b>	<b>Live Broadcast</b>	Included	Included				
<b>1.4</b>	<b>Simultaneous Interpretation</b>				<b>\$5,936.9 / day</b>		
1.4.1	Remote Simultaneous Interpretation	Via Zoom		Included	\$422.1 Half day platform		
1.4.5	Total interpreters per day	6			4 8		
1.4.2	Non-General Assembly sessions	Total days					
					6 days 6 days		
					\$4,984 \$30,149		
1.4.3	General Assembly sessions						
	Total days	11 days			13 days 13 days		
	Total price	\$6,755			\$11,630 \$65,322		
1.4.6	Use Relay interpretation	Most likely			Most likely Fully Simultaneous		
1.4.7	Technical equipment				\$85 / day		
1.4.8	Remote Technical support for BPW International and interpreters				\$405 / day		
1.4.9	Coordinating and Managing Interpreters				Included		

		Quote 1	Quote 2	Quote 3	RSI Quote
<b>1.5</b>	<b>Transcription (Automate)</b>	Included	Included		Not Applicable for Remote Service Interpretation (RSI) Provider
<b>1.6</b>	<b>Online Training Media</b>		4 hours	2 video	
<b>1.7</b>	<b>Other key offers</b>				
1.9.1	Single Join link for each attendee to sign in		Included		
1.9.2	Personalize join page with agenda for each attendee		Included		
1.9.3	Online Event Tools		Included		
1.9.4	Branding		Included		
1.9.5	Marketing and Sale Optimization		Included		
<b>II</b>	<b>Others</b>				
2.1	Discount		- \$316		
2.2	White-Label Platform set up (Custom branding for BPW International)		\$3,192		
2.3	Production Design and Production Management			\$3,802	
2.4	VAT / Tax	Quote excludes tax	Quote excludes tax	\$2,927	
	<b><i>TOTAL PRICES QUOTED in USD</i></b>	<b>\$12,342</b>	<b>\$24,055</b>	<b>\$44,750</b>	<b>\$112,801</b>

<b>III</b>	<b>Additional Services</b>				
3.1	Online Registration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registration / Ticket selling</li> <li>• Registration Support</li> <li>• Online payment processing</li> <li>• Issuing Tickets</li> <li>• Platform Fees for Paid Events</li> </ul>		8% of registration revenue		
3.2	Live Streaming system			Already include	\$640 / pay