

Dear All

We are very impressed with your interest, support and commitment to ensure that the 2nd International Congress of Biological Control can take place in Davos, Switzerland, at the end of April 2021. Many thanks indeed for your engagement during the early registration process and the submission of papers and posters. All this support has reassured us that you are really interested with the idea that ICBC2 should take place.

As you are all very much aware, the current COVID-19 situation worldwide is very dynamic and unpredictable. We all heard with some interest that a vaccine candidate against COVID-19 has achieved significant success in the first interim analysis. This creates hope but it will take some time until we will all benefit from these positive developments.

IOBC and CABI, as the organizers of ICBC2, are still very committed but we also have to evaluate the potential financial risks associated with organizing such an international event. In order to minimize this financial risk, we were able to make a new arrangement with the Davos Congress Centre which was instrumental to us remaining committed to making this event happen.

Based on this new arrangement, we are going ahead with the plan for a hybrid event which will allow personal presence in Davos but will also support participants virtually. Both “offline” and “online” congress participants will be able to present talks or to present posters. Everything will be organized in such a way that we can switch the event to a 100% virtual meeting, if required due to the COVID-19 situation, as little as 6 weeks prior to the meeting date.

However, to make an international meeting, such as ICBC2, an appealing event for an international audience will remain a challenge. The different time zones are not helping and you might have already observed that virtual meetings are never really satisfying when you have to deal with these kind of time zone differences (12 hours difference in both extremes!!). It will be unavoidable that a number of the presentations will have to be recorded. We have already made good contacts with a number of IT service providers who have suggested innovative ways to keep everybody engaged.

Nonetheless, we will slightly change the format so that both “offline” and “online” participants can enjoy panel discussions or keynote speakers in a live format together. The morning and afternoon scientific sessions will be live, of course, for the “offline” participants but the “online” participants will have to decide according to their time zones which scientific sessions they like to attend live. All the presentation will be available as video clips so nobody will miss anything (and you can pick and choose as you like).

Next week, we will contact the session organizers to inform them about the current interest in their session and if they have been selected for the hybrid format whereas some other scientific sessions might be selected for 100% virtual format and some others will be not considered going forward based on the current feedback.

After this consultation process with the session organizers, we will come back to you to announce the final programme and we might look for some additional contributions to make the programme complete. At this point in time, deadlines will be announced and the payment requirements will be clarified.

We hope that this information helps you to better understand what we are planning to do and on the other hand it helps you to stay engaged and to further support this process through your ongoing commitment.

Stay safe and best wishes,

Ulli, George and Martin