

International Union of Crystallography

Acta Cryst. (1990). A46, 716-719

Extraordinary General Assembly, London, England, 19 December 1989 Minutes

These Minutes have been prepared by J. N. King, Executive Secretary, under the authority of A. I. Hordvik, General Secretary and Treasurer of the IUCr and Secretary of the Extraordinary General Assembly.

List of delegates

The following list gives the names of official delegates appointed by the Adhering Bodies and present at the Extraordinary General Assembly. The names are listed by the countries to which the respective Adhering Bodies belong, and the number of votes of the Adhering Body is given in parentheses after the name of the country. The 12 countries thus represented had, between them, 40 votes.

Belgium (2): G. S. D. King
Canada (3): S. C. Nyburg
China, People's Republic of (4): X.-j. Xu
France (4): M. Hospital
Israel (1): F. H. Herbststein
Italy (3): G. Filippini
Japan (4): H. Harada
Netherlands (2): H. Schenk
Switzerland (2): H. D. Flack
UK (5): J. A. K. Howard (Chairman), J. I. Langford
USA (5): W. L. Duax
USSR (5): D. M. Kheiker.

Present as members of the Executive Committee

M. Nardelli (President), Y.-q. Tang (Vice-President), A. I. Hordvik (General Secretary and Treasurer), Th. Hahn (Immediate Past President), A. Authier, P. Coppens, R. Diamond, A. Kálmán, E. N. Maslen, V. I. Simonov. J. N. King was in attendance as Executive Secretary, together with his Assistant, Anne Cawley, and M. H. Dacombe.

(1) Introductory remarks by the President

Professor Nardelli opened the proceedings at 2.15 p.m. He welcomed the delegates and thanked them for coming to London from so many countries. He also expressed his thanks to those Adhering Bodies who, though unable to send a delegate to the Extraordinary General Assembly, had sent their opinions by letter. He reminded delegates that these postal responses were only opinions, and not votes, but to ensure that all the delegates were fully informed of these opinions they had been summarized in a paper which had been distributed to the delegates at the start of the meeting.

(2) Summary of the situation leading to the Extraordinary General Assembly

Professor Nardelli referred to the notice sent to the Secretaries of all National Committees for Crystallography on 9 August, setting out the resolution made by the Executive Committee at its last meeting, in July 1989, and announcing the Extraordinary General Assembly. He explained that this resolution was not binding on the IUCr. It was just a recommendation, because the decision of choosing the place of a General Assembly and Congress of the IUCr is the prerogative of the General Assembly. The General Assembly must decide and the Executive Committee must execute. The Executive Committee could make proposals and suggestions but the General Assembly must make the decision, and this Extraordinary General Assembly had been called to decide on the location of the 1993 General Assembly and Congress. He read out the Executive Committee resolution, that *the Executive Committee invites the Chinese National Committee to accept that the US Adhering Body be asked to organize the 1993 IUCr General Assembly and Congress, and that the General Assembly and Congress in Beijing be postponed to 1996.*

He reminded delegates of the fundamental point that the IUCr Congresses and General Assemblies must be held in places where the IUCr was sure that participants from every country could attend, with no obstacles at all. After the events in China in mid 1989, there was some uncertainty in the minds of the Executive Committee members as to whether the situation then prevailing was such as would ensure a successful meeting in Beijing with complete free circulation of scientists according to the ICSU principles. The Executive Committee was, of course, very concerned for its crystallographic colleagues in China because the policy of the IUCr was to help crystallographers everywhere and, in this case, to help Chinese crystallographers. The Executive Committee could see that cancelling the Congress in Beijing could have some negative effects on them. Thus, after extensive discussions, the Executive Committee formulated the resolution now before the Extraordinary General Assembly. In doing so, the Executive Committee hoped that this formulation would be seen as being in favour of our Chinese colleagues, in principle, but taking account of changes in the situation in China in mid 1989.

Although it was the responsibility of the General Assembly to make the decision, the Executive Committee felt that it had a duty to collect as much information as possible on the situation. In the absence of several alternative locations, the Executive Committee considered that it was not practical to defer the decision until the Bordeaux meeting in July 1990, and therefore decided it was necessary to call an Extraordinary General Assembly to make the decision before the end of 1989.

(3) Consideration of the Executive Committee resolution

Professor Nardelli then referred to the paper summarizing the postal responses received from 16 of the Adhering Bodies, representing 26 votes, namely from Australia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, German Democratic Republic, Federal Republic of Germany, Hungary, India, Mexico, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Sweden and Yugoslavia. Of these, 15, representing 25 votes, supported the Executive Committee's resolution concerning the 1993 General Assembly, and 14, representing 23 votes, supported the resolution concerning the 1996 General Assembly. One Adhering Body (Sweden), representing 2 votes, wanted a decision on the latter General Assembly deferred for consideration at Bordeaux in 1990 and another (Hungary), representing 1 vote, opposed both parts of the resolution. The 12 Adhering Bodies represented at the Extraordinary General Assembly had 40 votes between them. Seven Adhering Bodies (from Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Chile, New Zealand, Poland and Portugal) had not replied.

The President reminded the delegates that the IUCr should not be concerned with political aspects. It had always restricted itself to scientific aspects only, and had striven for free circulation of scientists. Therefore a letter had been sent to the China Association for Science and Technology (CAST), the body which had invited the IUCr to meet in China, inquiring about the current situation concerning the organization of a Congress. This letter sought assurances that everything would be satisfactory for a Congress in 1996, particularly regarding the free circulation of scientists, including young Chinese scientists at present in other countries but who might wish to return to China for an IUCr Congress. Copies of this letter, and the reply received very recently from CAST giving such assurances, were distributed to the delegates, and their texts are given below.

Text of letter of 20 September 1989 from the IUCr Executive Secretary to Mr Chen Jun, Deputy Director, Department of International Affairs, China Association for Science and Technology:

In view of the Extraordinary General Assembly of the International Union of Crystallography to be held on 19 December 1989 in London, a copy of the announcement of which is enclosed, I have been asked by the President of the IUCr to obtain some information and assurances from the China Association for Science and Technology. In view of recent events in Beijing the IUCr wishes to receive your categorical assurance that CAST would be able to host the International Congress of Crystallography and the IUCr General Assembly in Beijing in 1996, that appropriate facilities would be available, and that the ICSU principles concerning the free circulation of scientists would be upheld. Also, in view of these recent events, some students from the People's Republic of China who have been studying abroad have chosen to stay abroad and not return to the PRC. Can CAST give categorical assurances that any of these people wishing to return to the PRC for the Congress in 1996 will be allowed to do so and, after the Congress, will be allowed to leave the PRC again? It is, of course, necessary to be able to present the relevant information and assurances to the General Assembly of the IUCr.

Text of reply of 15 December 1989 from Mr Chen Jun:

Thank you very much for your letter dated 20 September. Unfortunately, I went abroad in October and November, and your letter did not reach me until last week. Hence the delay of my reply. Recently, due to the misunderstanding of the current situation in China, many international organizations and scientists are worried that it might be difficult to hold international conferences in China as planned and that China will change its policy towards intellectuals. As a matter of fact, the policy of "respecting knowledge, respecting the intellectuals" has not been changed nor will it be changed in the future. At present, the Beijing event has calmed down and public order is already back to normal. Foreign businessmen and tourists have returned to Beijing again. In the last five months, many international conferences were held in China on schedule and were very successful. Sponsors and organizers of international conferences to be held in China in the next few years have clearly indicated that the original programs will remain unchanged. For example, at the plenary session of the IUPAC conference held in Lund, Sweden on August 16, a unanimous decision was made to hold an academic meeting in Beijing with 2000 participants in 1993. Additionally, IUGS, IUPAP, IUG and a number of other international organizations have all decided to hold conferences and seminars in China as planned. Therefore, we welcome once again the International Congress of Crystallography and the IUCr General Assembly to be held in Beijing. You may rest assured that we will respect the ICSU principle concerning the free circulation of scientists and provide scientists the world over and Chinese students abroad with all facilities for free attendance at the Congress and General Assembly.

The Vice-President, Professor Tang, then addressed the Assembly at the invitation of the President, to report on the present situation in China, since he was directly involved in the organization of the Congress in Beijing. He said that he fully understood the concern of the Executive Committee that the events in Beijing in June could affect the success of the IUCr Congress there. However, he had talked to many colleagues in China and they were still very keen to host the Congress in 1993. The facilities and resources mentioned to the General Assembly in Perth would still be available. The Congress would be held at the site of the 1990 Asian Games, and about 90% of the buildings on that site were now completed. The people there looked forward to hosting the Congress. He thanked the Executive Committee members for their consideration. He personally considered that the most significant question to be decided with respect to holding the Congress in China was whether China maintained its 'open door' policy or not.

Before opening the meeting for general discussion the President called on J. Harada to present some questions which had already been submitted in writing by the Japanese National Committee for Crystallography.

Professor Harada explained that the resolution presented by the IUCr Executive Committee had been discussed by the Japanese National Committee. However, it was not clear to them under what sort of considerations the Executive Committee had reached its conclusion. Because the reasons were not indicated with the resolution, they felt that they lacked information available to the European crystallographic community, although they did understand that the difficulties had arisen because of the terrible

incidents which happened in Beijing last June. From recent correspondence with 30 Chinese crystallographers, it was understood that they still wished to be invited to host the 1993 Congress in Beijing. They were confident that there would not be trouble for them in organizing the Congress. They were also confident in inviting crystallographers from all outside countries. Professor Harada reminded delegates that the Asian Crystallographic Association (AsCA) was formed at the Perth Congress in 1987, and was accepted there as a Regional Associate of the IUCr. Its President was S. R. Hall and he, Professor Harada, was its Secretary. AsCA felt that it would be a good opportunity to have the IUCr Congress at Beijing in Asia, as holding the Congress there would encourage the local scientists in all areas related to crystallography. On this basis the Japanese National Committee still hoped that the 1993 Congress would be held in Beijing, in accordance with the General Assembly resolution at the Perth Congress, unless there was serious danger of violation of the ICSU rules for the free circulation of scientists. He therefore asked the IUCr Executive Committee the following questions on behalf of the Japanese National Committee for Crystallography:

(1) The arrangements for the Beijing Congress were made with the Chinese Adhering Body, Academia Sinica. Was it considered that that body contributed to the suppression of Chinese dissidents?

(2) The IUCr requires that the ICSU rules on the free circulation of scientists should be observed by the country in which the Conference or Congress is organized. Was it considered that the Chinese government would not observe its obligation of the ICSU rules for the Beijing meeting?

(3) In comparison with the situation for the Kyoto meeting in 1972 it seems possible that the final decision on the Beijing meeting would be made at the Bordeaux Congress next year. This would have the advantage of allowing more time for the situation in China to settle down again. Was this considered by the Executive?

Professor Hahn, Immediate Past President and representative of the IUCr on ICSU, replied on behalf of the Executive Committee.

For the first question, the answer was clearly 'no'. The Executive Committee never had any information or suspicion that Chinese scientists contributed to the suppression of human rights or freedom. On the contrary, it was the Executive Committee's opinion that scientists, as Academia Sinica and as individuals, were suffering from the suppression of human rights and freedom of movement. It was, of course, the government in a country which had to give the guarantee of free circulation of scientists, not a body such as Academia Sinica.

For the second question, the answer was decidedly 'yes'. This was, in fact, the heart of the matter. When the Executive Committee met in July, so soon after the grave situation appeared in Beijing, this was the central issue in the discussions. This was not brought about by scientists but by the government and, in wording its resolution, the Executive Committee wanted to protect, as much as possible, the interests of the scientists in China. This, in turn, led to the second part of the resolution, which did not mention a cancellation of the 1993 Congress but, instead, an interchange of the locations for the 1993 and 1996 Congresses.

The third question was more of a technical nature, asking for the decision to be postponed until the Bordeaux Congress in July 1990. Although the Japanese had been able to organize their 1972 Congress in three years, the situation had changed in recent years. More than three years was now needed by most potential hosts, with the requirement of budget approvals and booking of Congress venues. For this reason the US National Committee for Crystallography considered that it would be quite impossible to host the 1993 Congress unless the decision was made before the end of 1989. This precluded any postponement of the decision until the next normal meeting of the General Assembly in Bordeaux, which otherwise would have been the natural course of action.

In response to requests for clarification, the President explained that the intention of the Executive Committee was not to cancel the Congress in Beijing but to postpone it by three years. The decision taken now on the 1993 Congress still had to be confirmed by the 1990 General Assembly in Bordeaux, although it was reasonable to expect that a decision made today would not be changed in 1990 unless circumstances had changed dramatically. In the opinion of the Executive Committee, when it met in July 1989, the situation in China had changed dramatically from when the General Assembly in Perth in 1987 gave preliminary acceptance to the invitation to meet in China in 1993. Any decision taken now on the 1996 Congress would be subject to 'preliminary consideration' by the General Assembly in Bordeaux and final confirmation by the General Assembly in 1993, as prescribed in the IUCr Statutes and By-Laws.

In answer to a question from the delegates, W. L. Duax (USA) thought it likely that, should it be decided to hold the 1993 Congress in Beijing, the USA would be willing to extend an invitation to hold the 1996 Congress in the USA.

On the question of who could vote, Statute 5.7 was noted, whereby any Adhering Body not represented at a General Assembly might forward its views to the General Secretary by letter, and such views should be made known to the General Assembly if received before voting took place. This Statute had been complied with by the distribution of this information. However, the only people who could vote on the issue were the delegates attending the Extraordinary General Assembly.

G. S. D. King (Belgium) expressed the hope that the General Assembly in Bordeaux would support the decision taken today, although no one could guarantee this, because a change at Bordeaux would cause very great difficulties to all concerned with the 1993 Congress.

F. H. Herbstein (Israel) asked what the position of CAST was in relation to the government, with particular reference to its ability to guarantee free circulation. Professor Tang explained that, although CAST was non-governmental, it was in charge of scientific exchanges with other countries. CAST's attitude had been very positive in inviting the IUCr to China in 1993.

Professor Coppens raised the question of young Chinese scientists outside China. He explained that many of these students, particularly those in the USA and in Europe, had been involved in demonstrations which were now labelled as being against the Chinese government. These scientists, who normally would form a large part of the Chinese scientific community in the future, were really concerned that they would not be able freely to attend a Congress in

China. This was an aspect of the free circulation of scientists. He then read extracts from a letter from such a crystallographer who felt he would be taking a great personal risk if he attended a Congress in China. Professor Coppens believed delegates should take into account the concerns of such members of the new generation of crystallographers.

H. D. Flack (Switzerland) asked whether there was anything in the ICSU principles on free circulation with respect to the circulation of nationals within their national boundaries. Professor Hahn explained that the ICSU principles required free access for all *bona fide* scientists from all countries to attend a scientific meeting in the host country. He did not think that these principles specifically mentioned exit visas, probably because this problem had not arisen before.

G. S. D. King (Belgium) said that every country reserved the right to treat its own citizens as it wished.

J. I. Langford (UK) reminded delegates of the wording of the 1958 ICSU resolution on free circulation, which stated that the participation in any scientific activity in a country had no implication with respect to recognition of the government of that country. In other words, the IUCr would not be recognizing the actions of the government in charge by deciding to hold a Congress in China.

J. A. K. Howard (UK) asked whether the question of egress, i.e. the right of exit, from any country had been a problem in any past meetings. There was at present a major concern that egress from China for young Chinese nationals might be in question. Could anyone guarantee free egress? The President reminded delegates that the Executive Secretary had sought this assurance from CAST. CAST's reply was that it would respect the ICSU principles concerning the free circulation of scientists and provide scientists the world over and Chinese students abroad with all facilities for free attendance at the Congress and the General Assembly.

Professor Coppens then referred to the case of a Chinese student who returned to China from the USA on a personal visit and was imprisoned. However, several speakers supported the opinion that, no matter how regrettable such instances might be, they had no relevance to the present discussion, which was concerned only with the free circulation of scientists attending a scientific meeting. Professor Tang told delegates that there were many thousands of Chinese students studying or working in the USA who were not US citizens but were still Chinese citizens and therefore should act in conformity with China's laws.

W. L. Duax (USA), when asked what the attitude of the US National Committee for Crystallography (USNCCr) was at present, replied that there was some consensus of opinion within the Committee. He had compiled a draft statement for presentation at the Extraordinary General Assembly should this prove desirable, had circulated it to his Committee for comment, and had taken note of the comments he had received. He then read out the following statement.

Because there has been some misunderstanding about the position of the USNCCr concerning the site for the 16th International Congress of the IUCr, we would like to offer the following points of clarification.

1. *The USNCCr opposes holding the 1993 meeting in China. As recently as 13 October 1989, the members of the USNCCr*

were unanimous in their opposition to holding the International Congress of the IUCr in China in 1993. The principal reason for this opposition expressed by the members of the USNCCr was concern for the welfare of Chinese students in China and abroad. Members of the USNCCr question whether it is possible for the Chinese organizers to realistically assure the IUCr that there would be free circulation of scientists under current conditions in China.

2. *The Executive Committee of the IUCr proposed a change in venue for the 1993 Congress at its meeting in Chester on 19 July 1989. [The statement then set out the resolution, which is already given in the present Minutes.]*

3. *The USNCCr agreed to host the 1993 meeting if this was the wish of the Executive Committee and representatives of Adhering Bodies. At the request of the President of the IUCr, a feasibility study was conducted by the USNCCr and it was determined that it was physically and economically possible to hold the 1993 meeting in the US. With the understanding that the resolution before the Extraordinary General Assembly had the unanimous approval of the Executive Committee and had been endorsed by those planning the meeting in China, the USNCCr unanimously supported it. The USNCCr does not consider its efforts to identify a potential site for the 1993 meeting should have any bearing upon the vote to be taken today. The members of the USNCCr do not wish to benefit in any way from the misfortune of our Chinese colleagues, and have only acted in response to the specific request of the Executive Committee. The USNCCr urges delegates to resolve the question of the suitability of China as a site for the 1993 meeting on its own merits.*

(4) Voting procedure and decisions

To separate the specific points in the resolution, the Executive Committee proposed that voting should take place separately on three distinct resolutions, which were presented to the delegates and are set out below.

(i) *The Extraordinary General Assembly accepts the recommendation of the Executive Committee that the 1993 General Assembly and Congress will not be held in Beijing.*

(ii) *The preliminary approval by the General Assembly in 1987 for the General Assembly and Congress to be held in Beijing in 1993 is now transferred by the Extraordinary General Assembly to 1996.*

(iii) *The Extraordinary General Assembly accepts the offer of the US Adhering Body to hold the 1993 General Assembly and Congress in the USA.*

It was explained that all voting would be by secret ballot, and that the second and third proposals would be discussed and voted on only if the first resolution was passed.

In the subsequent secret ballot the first resolution was not approved. The voting was 15 votes in favour; 22 votes against; 3 abstentions.

The Extraordinary General Assembly had therefore decided that the 1993 General Assembly and Congress would be held in Beijing, this decision still needing final approval by the Bordeaux General Assembly.

The President thanked the delegates for attending and closed the Extraordinary General Assembly at 3.40 p.m.