

## The Secretary General's report

This, my second year as Secretary-General started off very well after last year's congress. After Kraków most duties were to get minutes ready on time and to follow up on all decisions. Some governing documents had to be changed, to reflect decisions that had been taken during the congress.

During November-February we started the preparations for the elections of Section officers. Letters were sent out to all sections asking them as to whether their officers were willing to sit for a second term, or not. And in the case there were not enough officers for all posts, asking them to start looking for replacements. During that work we also noticed that our governing documents did not say anything about the number of terms for vice-chairs and secretaries. The Chair can only be prolonged once, but there are no rules for the others. We had some discussions about it, but decided not to propose a change for the time being. Up until now it has not created any problems.

Quite a lot of work has been put into communicating with the countries that have considered hosting the IAML Congresses in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024. This was before Covid-19 entered into our lives, and all seemed settled for a congress in Prague this year and after that Stellenbosch 2021. During winter, we also got applications from several other countries for the years following 2021, so all looked very promising – and yes it still does, even though things have changed due to Covid-19.

The last two days of February the Board met at its annual Mid-Year Board meeting. This year we were hosted very nicely by Anna Pensaert in the beautiful town of Cambridge, England. We had two very productive days, and also managed to see a bit of beautiful Cambridge and of the Pendlebury Library and University Library Music Department.

However, during our visit to Cambridge we also noted that something was happening in the world, something that did not seem so nice: People had started talking about Corona and Covid-19, in some parts of the world people were turning ill and even dying, and we had a feeling that this might not turn out well. I was on the same flight as the President-Elect and saw her wearing a facemask, and thought, wow, is it that bad now! Maybe it was not so bad right then, but in a few days only things turned much worse.

Already two weeks after our meeting in Cambridge, most countries locked down, closing their borders and taking a flight somewhere seemed impossible. So here, we are now, four months later, almost in the same state, but the world is slowly, but very slowly, opening up again.

All the things happening after the Cambridge meeting made us realise that we needed an urgent board meeting again to address all the consequences that there might be for our organisation due to COVID-19. The meeting was of course held as a web meeting. We needed to address the urgent matter of this year's congress and also future years' congresses. We decided to talk with the organisers of both Prague 2020 and Stellenbosch 2021 at once. And so we did!

We were so lucky that Prague managed to postpone the 2020 congress to 2021 and Stellenbosch had actually already asked to have their congress moved to 2022 – that was now very easy to say yes to! As far as the years after that are concerned, we have also talked to the applicants of those congresses and several are willing to push their applications forward with one year, so maybe we already now have applications for every year from 2022 until 2026. But those applications will be discussed further at the next real General Assembly, so you will have to stay curious until then!

After this decision on the Prague congress, we were discussing what to do with all the time from March 2020 until the congress in Prague in July 2021. We then realised that it could actually be a good thing to organise something this summer, not a real congress, but something informal to let everybody meet anyway, even if only virtually. So then, the idea of organising this IAML Online meeting came alive. At first we only thought of having something very short, very informal, with mainly information from the Board, but now it has grown and it almost reminds me of a real congress 😊

Finally, since the arrival of Covid-19 the Board has introduced monthly Board meetings on Zoom. That way we are able to handle some of the most urgent questions coming up– and they are quite a few. To me at least, these meetings have been a success, and even after the times are back to more normal, I would like us to keep on having these, if not every month, so at least quite frequently.

That's all from me, thanks for your attention!

Anders Cato  
20. July 2020

