



FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES CONSEILS  
EN PROPRIÉTÉ INTELLECTUELLE

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF  
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ATTORNEYS

INTERNATIONALE FÖDERATION  
VON PATENTANWÄLTEN

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**Circular letter**

## RE \ FICPI's response to the Covid-19 outbreaks / postponement of the Korea Symposium and cancellation of the Goa ExCo

Dear FICPI Family,

As you will know by now, the Bureau and I have taken the difficult recent decisions to postpone the FICPI Korea Symposium, which would have taken place on 23-24 April in Seoul, and to cancel the Executive Committee Meeting, which was due to take place in Goa in just two weeks' time. These were difficult decisions to take, and I want to express my personal gratitude to the members of Bureau and FICPI's Advisory Council for their excellent guidance and support.

In monitoring the rapidly developing situation of the Covid-19 coronavirus outbreaks, initially in China, and then elsewhere, we had to balance the interests of the Federation, which we were elected to manage and protect, against the interests and safety of our delegates and guests at these meetings.

Initially, we had hoped to be able to continue with both meetings, since the risk of infection appeared to be small, but as the situation developed in South Korea, it became apparent that even if we had allowed the Symposium to go ahead, it would have been seriously impaired in terms of the quality of the presentations, since a number of key speakers were no longer able to attend, and the geographical diversity of the attendees, which has always been a strength and hallmark of FICPI meetings. Last-minute cancellation by presenters and moderators would have created even more work for already overburdened FICPI members and others.

At the time of writing, it is clear that we made the right decision, as the situation in Korea has unfortunately worsened, presenting an increased risk to the health of the attendees, which the Bureau could not permit.

I am pleased to say we received excellent cooperation from MECI, our professional conference organiser in Korea, as well as from the hotel and suppliers, who have agreed to allow us to hold the Symposium on 24-26 February 2021, with no significant penalties for FICPI.

By the time we decided to cancel the symposium, we had already achieved an impressive number of delegates from Korea and from the rest of the world. We are hopeful that the majority of delegates will decide to maintain their registrations with a view to attending next year. We also hope that under better circumstances, we will even be able to increase the number of registrations and have a meeting that will be even better than it would have been this year.

With regard to Goa, it is clear from the available data that for the time being at least India appears to be less badly affected by Covid-19. Nevertheless, as outbreaks began to occur in Europe, especially in



Italy, with the indications being that the situation will deteriorate even further over the coming days and weeks, it became obvious that our ability to run a successful ExCo meeting was also in serious doubt. Key officials such as the Secretary General himself stood a significant and unacceptable risk of being quarantined upon arrival in India. The difficult decision for the Bureau with regard to the ExCo was that since there was no health emergency declared in India, cancelling the meeting would have led to a very substantial loss for the Federation, and this was something that the Bureau had to evaluate very carefully against the risks to our delegates' health and the likelihood of an impaired meeting to ensure our decision was rational and based on sound judgment.

In the end, the Bureau came to the conclusion in view of the increasing risks to health and the likelihood that a substantial number of delegates would not be able to attend, that the ExCo was no longer sustainable, notwithstanding the potentially huge financial loss, and we were unanimously supported in our decision by the Advisory Council, whom we consulted on an urgent basis.

I am pleased to report that since our decision to cancel, negotiations with the hotel in Goa have been fruitful, and we will be able to rearrange the meeting in 2022, when the Bureau hopes finally to be able to hold an ExCo there. Again, thanks to the diligent efforts of our Secretariat, conference organisers and others, we appear to have managed to minimise the potential loss for FICPI.

The Bureau and I are convinced that in the end we have made the right decisions for FICPI, for our delegates and guests and for our members who entrust us to manage and protect the Federation's reputation and finances.

I would like to express my personal gratitude and that of the entire Bureau to all those who have worked so hard over the last few months to prepare the Korea Symposium and the Goa ExCo. They are too numerous to mention all of them here by name; they include the programme managers, moderators, speakers for the Symposium, as well as the presidents and members of FICPI commissions and CET specialised groups who have prepared papers, workshops and presentations for the ExCo. I regret that we shall not benefit from all their hard work in March and April as planned, but rest assured their efforts will not have been wasted. We will regroup and hold the Korea Symposium next year, when we will all have a chance to enjoy to the excellent presentations that have been prepared, and the Bureau is now reviewing the various matters that the ExCo was to have discussed in Goa to see what needs to be actioned now, and what might be deferred a few months until October, when we hope to organise an ExCo back-to-back with the 19th Open Forum. Again, none of the hard work by delegates and commissions will have been in vain.

It would be remiss of me not personally to express my thanks to our Secretary General, **Roberto Pistolesi**, and our Treasurer General, **Marc Chauchard**, in particular for their wisdom and diligence in dealing with rapidly evolving situations in Korea and India and for doing their very considerable bests to protect the Federation from excessive losses. However, as I have already said, there are numerous others who deserve our thanks.

FICPI has a number of other upcoming events, including the US Seminar Series on International Patent Practice for US Practitioners, which is being held in four cities on the Eastern Seaboard in May this year and the Cannes Forum in October. For the time being these events are still going ahead, and



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President

FICPI members continue to work hard on them. At the end of last week, I held a number of meetings in London in preparation for the World Congress next year. We hope that the Covid-19 situation will have subsided by the time these events are scheduled to be held to allow them to go ahead and to be great successes. However, as ever, the Bureau will continue to monitor the situation as it continues to develop and will make whatever decisions are in the best interests of the Federation and the health and wellbeing of its members.

For those who were registered for the Korea Symposium, your registrations will be maintained for the new dates of 24-26 February 2021 unless you wish to cancel, in which case the cancellation deadline has been extended to 19 November 2020. Hotel rooms will need to be rebooked. For those who were registered for the Goa ExCo, registration fees and advance payments for hotel rooms will be refunded to all delegates and that process will start next week. In each case, if you are affected, you can expect to hear from the conference organisers soon, if you have not already done so.

I hope to see as many of you as possible later in the year at a FICPI event. In the meantime, I hope you will all stay healthy and safe from this horrid virus.

Yours sincerely,

Julian Crump  
FICPI President