

## GUIDELINES FOR HOLDING INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCES IN INDIA\*

### PREAMBLE:

INTERNATIONAL conferences in science and technology have become an important activity for the members of the scientific community for mutual interaction and exchange of views, and to enable them to keep abreast of the latest developments in the specialised fields of knowledge. The number and size of such international scientific conferences have greatly increased of late, and further, financial support required for organising these conferences has become increasingly large. Having regard to the rapid expansion of Science & Technology activities in the country in recent years, there has been a general tendency, and rightly so, by the members of the Indian scientific community to invite, sponsor and host major international conferences in India. In this context, it would be useful for the smooth and efficient organisation of international scientific conferences, if a set of broad guidelines are readily available to the various scientific agencies, professional bodies and to the members of the scientific community in general. Based on its experience of assisting scientific bodies in holding such international conferences in India and through discussions with them, the Department of Science & Technology has formulated broad guidelines as given below. It is hoped that these guidelines and the annexed check list would help the organisers to expeditiously tackle procedural and financial problems in organising international scientific conferences.

### I. SCOPE AND APPLICATION:

1. These guidelines apply to the holding of large international conferences in science and technology as broadly indicated below:

- (a) Conferences held directly under the auspices of the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) and or any one of its Component Unions and Committees/Commissions and such other bodies. Such conferences are sponsored in India by the Indian National Science Academy (INSA), being the adhering organisation from India in the ICSU and its affiliated bodies. Conferences cosponsored by ICSU and its Component Unions and Committees are also covered by

these guidelines. Such cosponsorship is to be arranged through the INSA.

- (b) Conferences sponsored by or held under the auspices of other international professional scientific bodies, (*i.e.* other than ICSU and its Component Unions and Committees) being non-governmental bodies in which Indian scientists and technologists might be members/office bearers in their individual capacities or in which professional bodies/learned societies of India might be members. Such conferences might also be hosted in India by the autonomous research institutions/universities and other academic organisations or by registered professional societies, science academies etc.
- (c) For the purpose of these guidelines, large international conferences are to be distinguished from small scientific "discussion-meetings" where a few selected foreign scientists might be invited and where formalities such as payment of registration fee, membership etc are generally not applicable.

2. All the international scientific/professional organisations referred to in (a), and (b) above are non-governmental bodies. Therefore, these guidelines do not apply to official meetings of inter-governmental bodies and conferences organised by them (*e.g.* U.N. bodies such as UNESCO etc).

3. Scientific meetings organised under inter-Governmental bilateral agreements are not covered here.

### II. ORGANISATIONAL ASPECTS:

In order to derive maximum benefits out of holding an international scientific conference, it will be necessary to undertake a good deal of advance planning by the sponsoring and hosting agency in India. In particular, holding of conferences involving participation of many hundreds of foreign scientists should be *planned three to four years in advance*. The following general principles are relevant for planning and organising such conferences:

1. In determining the size of an international conference, the number of foreign scientists and the corresponding number of Indian participation is an important criteria. There are conferences with very limited foreign participation, say 10 to 15 foreign scientists who may be special invitees, key-note speakers etc. Other conferences involve participation of the order of 50 to 100 foreign scientists and those which have four to five times this number is also a special category to reckon with. Very few are mammoth conferences where a thousand or more foreign delegates might be involved. The size of a conference is

\* Prepared by the Department of Science and Technology, Govt. of India.

directly relevant for assessing the magnitude of tasks for its successful organisation. Based on the past experience and informal discussions, the organisers should initially make a realistic estimate of the size of the conference before the process and organisation starts.

2. A professional body or a science academy or similar agency/academic organisation should be identified at the outset as the host institution in India. This identified host institution will have all the organisational responsibilities for the conduct of the conference.
3. There shall be a National Organising Committee (NOC) for each large International Conference. The NOC should consist of eminent scientists and research workers in the subject area and such others as may be useful. In respect of ICSU related conferences NOC will be set up by the INSA who will also provide the secretariat support. The INSA will closely coordinate with the Department of Science and Technology before inviting to host a conference in India.
4. The NOC should take the total responsibility involving technical, financial and administrative matters concerned with the holding of the conference in India. Secretariat support to NOC shall be provided by the sponsoring/host organisation in India.
5. Outstanding Indian scientists who may take individual initiative to organise such conferences will also need the organisational backing of a Science Academy or institution. Private individuals and associations are not to be normally encouraged to organise, on their own, prestigious and large international conferences.
6. The tendency to convene frequent international conferences in the same subject is (as should be) discouraged since organising such conferences is a time, money and effort consuming activity. Moreover the expenditure and effort on frequent holding of conferences in the same subject are not (may not be) commensurate with the benefits.
7. The sponsoring and/or the host organisation in India should, at the very outset, arrange to identify a nodal Ministry/Department of the Central Government for all matters requiring specific Government approval, permission or clearance relating to the hosting of the conference. Other such matters may range from booking of Government buildings, clearances of foreign participants, security and sensitivity aspects to financial support through Government agencies. It will be the responsibility of the nodal Ministry to ensure that all the instructions issued by the Government of India from time to time relating to the holding of international conferences are complied with by the organisers in India.
8. International scientific conferences are often also co-sponsored by a number of national and international scientific bodies who have an interest in the subject area and in participating in the conference. Often the Indian organisers also approach national and international bodies with request for co-sponsorship either for securing more broad-based participation of scientists or for finan-

- cial and logistic support for the conduct of the conferences. While co-sponsorship by many Indian scientific bodies is desirable and welcome, request for co-sponsorship by international non-Governmental scientific bodies should be carefully considered in the light of any obligations on the Indian organisers resulting from such co-sponsorship (e.g. in terms of inviting scientists from a particular country or organisation). In this regard, request for co-sponsorship by ICSU or any of its Component Unions and Committees, or commissions should be routed only through the INSA, being the ICSU adhering organisation from India.
9. No commitment should be entered into with international bodies by Indian organisers which would result in embarrassment to India in respect of any matter relating to the conduct of the conference. Sponsorship or co-sponsorship of a conference by inter-governmental bodies (e.g. UNESCO, WHO, UNDP etc) might be sought or entertained only through the Government of India in the nodal Ministry/Department who will consult other wings of the Government as appropriate.

### III. STRUCTURE OF INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCES:

In structuring the international conferences, apart from the technical and other requirements of the specific area, the following broad principles should be kept in mind:

- (a) Participation by young Indian scientists should be encouraged and supported by the organisers to the maximum possible extent through travel grants, free boarding, concessional registration fee etc.
- (b) Fair representation must be given to well qualified Indian scientists as invited speakers (review speakers, rapporteurs) and chairpersons.
- (c) The greatest benefits usually accrue from smaller conferences involving 200 or less participants where closer interactions and exchange of views and indepth discussions would be possible. Large conferences involving many hundreds of scientists and large budgets are of use only if the scope of the subject and its application covers a broad range of areas each having its own specialisation so as to ensure the scientific and technical character of the discussions in different committees commissions etc.
- (d) The scientific utility of a conference will be largely lost if the proceedings are not brought out promptly within a reasonable time. In this respect the record of our scientific community is quite good and every effort should be made to keep up this tradition. The NOC should have a special responsibility to ensure that wherever necessary, adequate arrangements are made to bring out the proceedings without delay.
- (e) It is very seldom that in a purely scientific conference, politically sensitive or policy-sensitive matters come up. However, if such situations are anticipated envisaged in

exceptional cases, the Chairman of the National Organising Committee should obtain, well in advance, proper briefing from the Government of India through the nodal Ministry Department for appropriate action.

#### IV. FINANCIAL ASPECTS:

Holding of international conferences involve considerable expenditure. The National Organising Committee should take full responsibility for preparing a realistic budget for the conference and arrange the sources of funds for meeting the expenditure. The budget should be prepared in detail with due regard to economy in expenditure. The past traditions of the conference, involving financial commitment by the host country, should be carefully looked into. The budget should also take into account registration fee which may be fixed keeping in view the ability of individual Indian scientists to pay. If large funds are required from Government sources, an assurance of providing financial support to the extent required should be obtained from the concerned Government agency before any commitment is entered into for hosting the conference. The financial instructions issued by the Government of India in this regard will be applied by the nodal Ministry/Department concerned. Unspent balances out of grants given by Government agencies for holding the conferences should be returned to the agency concerned.

#### V. INFORMATION DISSEMINATION:

Since a number of professional bodies, academies, universities etc organise international conferences in different subjects, there is very often an overlapping in terms of the time and venue. This puts some strain not only on the resources but also on the scientists wanting to participate in these conferences in terms of time and preparation for effective participation. It is therefore desirable that a mechanism for disseminating information on the various conferences planned by different professional bodies for the period of two or three years in advance should be gradually evolved. In order to facilitate this, it would be helpful if various organizers in India could send the details of such planned scientific conferences to the Department of Science & Technology.

A check list of main points for facilitating implementation of these guidelines is enclosed (Annexure).

For further details/clarifications please write to:

Director,  
Science & Technology Promotion Division,  
Department of Science & Technology,  
Technology Bhavan,  
New Mehrauli Road,  
NEW DELHI 110016.

#### ANNEXURE

#### CHECK-LIST OF MAIN POINTS FOR ORGANISING INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCES IN INDIA.

1. Has a Science Academy/Professional Body/Research Institution/University or similar organisation in India been identified as the main sponsoring/hosting agency for the Conference? Has this body been provided with a fair amount of information (subject of the conference, list of possible speakers/invitees, size of the conference, its justification in Indian context etc)?
2. Has a National Organising Committee (NOC) been set up with over all responsibility for the conduct of the Conference?
3. If the conference is to be sponsored or co-sponsored by International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) or any of its Component Unions and Committees, is it arranged through the Indian National Science Academy (INSA)?
4. Has the nodal Ministry/Department of the Central Government been informed of the details of the proposed conference and the arrangements requiring Govt. approval or clearance before entering into commitments (*i.e.* for financial support, participation of foreign scientists etc).
5. Have arrangements been made to provide secretarial support to NOC by the sponsoring/host agency?
6. Have the broad guidelines issued by DST been taken into account in finalising the structure and logistics of the conference with the approval of NOC?
7. Has the detailed estimate of expenditure been prepared and source of funds committed before issuing first information circulars?
8. Does any other scientific or other large conference in India clash or overlap with your proposed conference in respect of dates, venue and subject area?
9. Have adequate arrangements been made for prompt and timely printing and publication of the proceedings as also pre-conference material, if needed?