INTERNATIONAL GEMMIOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

History of the IGC

The International Gemmological Conference (IGC) owes much of its origin to BIBOA (Bureau International pour la Bijouterie, Orfèvrerie, Argenterie), the International Jewellery and Gemstone Federation, the first Congress of which in 1926 recommended and defined use of the term cultured pearl.

Experts from various European gem testing laboratories were invited to attend a series of expert meetings that aimed to formulate the policies of BIBOA. In 1936, at the fifth conference of experts, collaboration among laboratories was acclaimed by traders and they encouraged Laboratory Directors to meet each other at a technical conference from which all commercial delegates would be excluded.

Technical meetings were held annually, and in 1951 a Technical Conference was held in Idar Oberstein to prepare for the next London Congress in 1952. Those attending the 1951 conference included Mr B.W. Anderson, Mr G. Gobel, Dr E. Gubelin, Mr F. Wolf, Mr A. Bonebakker, Mr H. Tillander, Mr A. Strondahl, and Mr O. Dragstead. It has been suggested that the future framework of the IGC was established at this meeting in Idar Oberstein.

The London Congress saw the restructuring of BIBOA in which Gemmological Associations were replaced by National Federal Committees, and BIBOA evolved into BIBOAH—the forerunner of CIBJO, now known as The World Jewellery Federation.

A Technical Conference met at Lugano from 23rd to 25th October 1952 at the initiative of Prof. K. Schlossmacher and Dr. E. Gubelin. Also present at this conference were Messrs B.W. Anderson, A. Bonebakker, O. Dragstead, G. Gobel, K. Siess and H. Tillander. At this historic meeting Dr E. Gubelin proposed creation of a “Committee of an International Gemmological Association” that would consist of one member per country; this member being the Director of a Gem Testing Laboratory, or a gemmologist of the calibre who could attend that meeting. This was agreed to, and this meeting was later considered to be the inaugural meeting of the IGC.

The first meeting of the IGC in Lugano was followed by subsequent meetings in Amsterdam (1953), Copenhagen (1954), London (1955), Munich (1956), Oslo (1957), Paris (1958), Milano (1960), Helsinki (1962), Vienna (1964); Barcelona (1966); Stockholm (1968); Brussels (1970); Vitznau, Switzerland (1972); Washington D. C. (1975), The Hague (1977), Idar Oberstein (1979), Kashiko-Jima (1981), Beruwela, Sri Lanka (1983); Sydney, Australia (1985); Rio de Janeiro (1987), Tremezzo, Italy (1989); Stellenboch (1991), Paris, France (1993); Bangkok, Thailand (1995); Idar Oberstein, Germany (1997); Goa, India (1999); Madrid, Spain (2001), Wuhan, China (2004); Moscow, Russia (2007); Arusha, Tanzania (2009), Interlaken, Switzerland (2011); Hanoi, Vietnam, (2013) and 34th will be held in Vilnius, Lithuania (2015).

Over the history of the IGC, that now in its fourth decade, it can therefore be seen that the International Gemmological Conference is the longest surviving gemmological conference to remain largely in its original format. Over its history, invited delegates representing 33 countries or areas – including Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Greece, Germany, Hong Kong, Israel, India, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Sweden, Thailand, U.S.A. and Zimbabwe – have been invited to participate in IGC meetings.
During the 20th IGC, which was held in Sydney, Australia, the members present elected nine members to Honorary Members status. The first Honorary Members of the IGC were Oliver Chalmers (Australia), Prof. A. Chikayama (Japan), and Mr R. Crowningshield (U.S.A), Mr. O. Dragsted (Sweden), Prof. Gubelin (Switzerland), Mr. R. T. Liddicoat (U.S.A), Mr. M. Masso (Spain), Dr. F. H. Pough (U.S. A) and Dr. J. M. Saul (Kenya).

In Italy, the IGC logo was designed by Roberto Sambonet and made in gold by Roberto Cusi offered to the conference delegates during the Tremezzo 1989.

In Italy, in 1989, the following rules were agreed for future meetings of the IGC:

1. The prime objective was to be the exchange of gemmological experiences.
2. Gemmology was to be the platform for all topics and was to be regarded as the principal theme.
3. It was decided that attendance at all further Conferences should be by invitation that would be determined where necessary by the Conference Secretary and the Executive Committee.
4. All delegates were to be encouraged to present papers; but this would not be mandatory.
5. All delegates must have a publishing record and all papers at IGC meetings must presented in English, both when written or spoken.
6. The Conference must keep foremost in mind the prime objectives and avoid dilution/confusion of this objective which, if not maintained, could result in a blank organization without true status or credibility.
7. Peripheral commercial activity must be kept to a minimum, and there should be no blatant sponsorship of any kind.

These rules, combined with the original concepts, have been kept as the basis for all conferences since. Any invitation is specific to the person invited and is not transferable.

Rules/Standard Operating Procedures of the IGC

Membership
Membership of the IGC shall consist of:

1. **Honorary Members** are those who are senior members of the IGC and are elected by Delegates on an as-required basis.
2. **Delegates** are those who are elected from Observers, on the recommendation of the Executive Committee, from those Observers who have presented (in English) worthwhile presentations (either lectures, and/or posters) at three successive IGC meetings before becoming eligible for election as a Delegate.
3. **Observers** are those who shall be well published, internationally recognised gemmologists who are invited to attend IGC meetings on the invitation of either the Executive Committee, Delegate/s from the country in which they are resident, or the Conference Secretary of the country in which the IGC meeting is to be held.

Applications for Observer status, which shall be supported by a pertinent CV and list of publications, should be submitted to the Executive Committee for consideration before any invitation to attend an IGC is offered by the Conference Secretary.

Executive Committee
The day-to-day administration and decision making of the IGC shall be overseen by an Executive Committee that meets formally at IGC meetings, and in between meetings conducts the routine business of the IGC electronically by
email. Following nomination, new members of the Executive Committee shall be elected by majority vote of Delegates at the Business Meeting that follows each IGC.

From time to time, the Executive Committee shall elect a Chairman and also one Honorary Secretary, who will be responsible for detailed administration and the distribution of decisions of the Executive Committee to Honorary Members and Delegates.

Written minutes shall be kept for all meetings of the Executive Committee and General Business Meetings of Delegates. Copies of these minutes shall be circulated by the Honorary Secretary to eligible Honorary Members and Delegates.

Meetings of the IGC
IGC meetings should be held every two years in a host country approved by Honorary Members and Delegates. Historically these meetings have been held in odd calendar years.

IGC meeting should be timed so as not to clash with other meetings (e.g. IMA meetings) that Delegates are likely to attend.

The venue for IGC meetings should alternate between European and non-European countries.

A country wishing to host an IGC meeting shall submit their proposal first to the Executive Committee and then formally present their proposal to Delegates. The decision to accept or reject a proposal to host an IGC meeting will be made by majority vote of Honorary Members and Delegates present at the IGC Business Meeting, or electronically if an IGC meeting is not being held at the time a decision needs to be made.

Countries hosting IGC meetings shall establish their own administrative structures to ensure the efficient planning and operation of the IGC. Costs involved in hosting an IGC shall be met by Registration Fees paid by Honorary Members, Delegates and Observers attending the meeting, and financial sponsorship from private, institutional and government sources. Day-to-day administration for an IGC shall be the responsibility of an elected Conference Secretary, who shall be either an Honorary Member or Delegate of the IGC.

General responsibilities of the Conference Secretary of each IGC include:

- Planning and implementation for the IGC of:
  - pre-conference activities
  - post-conference activities
  - the formal IGC conference
  - associated cultural activities and events
  - guest entertainment program
  - all finances
  - receipt and compilation of abstracts of papers
  - publication of proceedings of IGC conference
  - implementation of poster presentations

- Obtaining the necessary government permissions and other political factors

- Organisation of formalities required for different foreign visitors in the host country e.g. visas, special permissions etc.
Attendance at IGC meetings, of Delegates and Observers from countries other than the host country, shall be restricted to a maximum of five registrations per country. This restriction does not include Honorary Members.

Each IGC shall consist of a minimum of:

1. Two to three day pre-and post-conference study excursions to areas and facilities of gemmological interest.

2. A 1-day session, prior to the IGC, at which previously nominated delegates and/or observers will be invited to give presentations to gemmologist members of the country hosting the IGC.

3. A five-day professional conference that shall consist of:
   - Formal papers of 15 minutes duration, followed by 5 minutes of questions and answers; and,
   - Poster presentations that shall be scheduled independently so that adequate time is allowed for each poster to be presented by its author/s and then have its content available for discussion by interested delegates.

4. A Business Meeting for Delegates of a maximum of 1 hour duration that traditionally follows closure of the IGC professional conference.

5. A 1-hour General Discussion session to allow Honorary Members, Delegates and Observers time to exchange opinions on future directions of the IGC.

To minimise duplication of content, the titles and brief outlines of all papers, which an Honorary Member, Delegate or Observer plans present at an IGC meeting, shall be submitted to the Executive for approval. Illustrations used for presentations at IGC meetings shall be presented in CD ROM (not laptop computer), 35 mm slide, or OH projector formats.

If feasible, future meetings of the IGC should be held at the hotel/institution in which the accommodation for Honorary Members, Delegates and Observers has been arranged by the Host country organising committee.

If sufficient seating is available at the venue/s for future IGC lectures, gemmology students from the country hosting the IGC shall be encouraged to attend lectures presented at that IGC.