

World Archaeological Congress

Founded 1986



13 December, 2021

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It has been nearly two years since the official declaration of the COVID pandemic, and every single domain of our lives has been affected. Face-to-face interactions and communications, the pillar of our social existence, have been severely curtailed, making us frustrated, sad, and anxious. It is difficult to be ourselves, to share thoughts, ideas, feelings and emotions, and above all, to discuss matters and find acceptable solutions with consensus grounded in deep mutual understanding and respect. We have found ways to get around various technical problems for achieving ever-better interactions and communications online, and our endeavours are generating some truly innovative solutions.

However, when it comes to discussing important matters and making community-wide collective decisions in a truly democratic manner, i.e., a manner that ensures everyone equal access to all the information upon which their decision is made and guaranteeing an equal say for and against a decision, we have a long way to go.

The World Archaeological Congress was founded upon the principle that it makes the utmost effort to make any decision as democratic as possible; that principle is firmly inscribed in Article 7 of the Statutes, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, and 7.4, in particular. I have cited them at the end of this message, because they are vitally important to understanding the implications of this principle.

In adopting those articles, WAC placed its decision-making upon an absolute in-person basis and also ensured equal access to information upon which decisions are made and an equal say to all those who represent their respective countries and are involved in the decision making.

We have twice postponed WAC-9 Prague, originally scheduled for July 2020. Those were hard decisions for the Executive and the Council, which are entrusted to take any necessary decisions for the interests of WAC between Assemblies. These decisions were made taking into consideration the COVID-related restrictions on international travel and that individual health concerns would prevent many participants from attending the Congress in person. We genuinely could not organize

a WAC Assembly under those COVID-induced circumstances.

As the date for WAC-9 Prague 2022 is fast approaching, we are compelled to make a difficult decision once again: whether we will hold the meeting in some form after two years' delay, or to postpone again. We have decided to go forward with the meeting in a hybrid format. Our decision is based on the tremendous thought, energy, and efforts invested by the Local Organizing Committee, the Council, and of course those who have been planning to take part in the meeting.

However, in making this decision, we confront a difficult dilemma. We cannot ensure genuine global participation due to travel restrictions and the vast discrepancies in Covid-19 vaccinations in different parts of the world. While some high-income countries have vaccination rates of 70% or 80%, only 6% of people in low-income countries have received more than one vaccination. In Nigeria, for example, only 1.8% of people are fully vaccinated. This discrepancy is a major barrier to the equality of decision-making that needs to underpin the policy decisions normally made by the WAC Assembly at a WAC Congress.

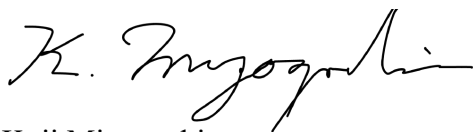
Consequently, we have come to two decisions:

- 1) WAC-9 in Prague will be held as an Extraordinary Congress without an Assembly.
- 2) WAC-10 will be held in 2024. We have concluded that two years will be sufficient for the ongoing pandemic to reduce to a level that allows WAC members from all countries to undertake international travel safely, allowing us to safely hold a WAC Assembly. In addition, holding WAC-10 in 2024 will return the Congress cycle to normal.

If WAC is to firmly maintain its foundational principle of being a truly democratic world archaeological community, we believe our decision is an inevitable one. The Statutes explicitly state that the WAC Congress should be 'normally' held every four years and the current COVID situation clearly can be defined as 'not normal'. We note that postponing the Assembly until 2024 also entails postponing the election of officers as the Statutes require that such elections can only be held at an Assembly. This extends the terms of office for the current Executive officers from the normal four-year duration to eight years.

The WAC Council plans to seek expressions of interest for the venue and organization of the 2024 Congress, in accordance with Statute Article 9 which designates the Council to take any decisions in the interests of WAC between the Assemblies.

We regret these unfortunate circumstances. We trust that members will support us as we do our best to stay true to WAC's vision of global equality during an extremely difficult time for people in all parts of the world.



Koji Mizoguchi
President of the World Archaeological Congress

Pertinent Statues

7.1 The principal policy-making body of WAC shall be the Assembly which shall:

- decide all matters relating to policy;
- elect the officers of WAC; and
- determine the venue and organisation of future International Congresses.

7.2 Elections to the Assembly shall be held at each International Congress and the members of the Assembly shall hold office until the end of that International Congress.

7.3 Meetings of the Assembly shall be held during each International Congress.

7.4 Membership of the Assembly shall consist of:

- a] one National Representative per country, WAC members from which are attending the International Congress, selected by the individual WAC members from that country attending that International Congress. In the case where no WAC members are present from a country, a non-WAC member may attend the Assembly as an observer, but will not have a vote;
- b] any member of the Council not a member under the above;