

## **General Assembly of the ISBT**

Draft Minutes of the General Assembly of the ISBT

Date: Tuesday June 7, 2022

Location (On-line): Zoom meeting

Time: 14:00 CEST

Attendees were welcomed to the on-line General Assembly 2022 by Eszter Herzcenik, ISBT Scientific Officer, who explained how the voting would work and how to ask questions in the Q&A box.

### **Welcome – ISBT President (Erica Wood)**

Erica Wood thanked everyone for attending it and highlighted that the quorum of the meeting had been reached, so the General Assembly could go ahead and that results of the votes would be valid. The maximum number of attendees on-line was 117.

#### **1. Draft Minutes of the General Assembly 2021, June 2 – virtual meeting**

The minutes from the 2021 General Assembly which was held on-line on June 2 have been previously shared with the members. The motion to accept the minutes was proposed by Miquel Lozano and seconded by Jo Wiersum, and the minutes were accepted.

#### **2. Report of ISBT President**

The strategic goals for 2019-2024 were shown and are still being followed. These include education & knowledge, training and implementation of knowledge, international outreach, congress, publications, digital resources, supporting our working parties, governance and advocacy for donors and patients.

Erica shared a summary of the year 2021-2022 and mentioned that despite COVID-19 ISBT has supported 12 ISBT Academy events in six countries and implemented a new policy for reviewing applications.

We worked with societies with which we have an MoU; for example, AABB virtual meeting in October 2021 where we had a joint session and a booth; there were also executive level talks on potential further collaborations between the societies. Another example is ABHH virtual meeting in November 2021 where ISBT had a joint session.

There is a new collaboration with the Systematic Reviews initiative (SRI), based in Oxford, UK. ISBT and SRI have jointly developed the Transfusion Round-Ups series, which has been positively received by ISBT members. These consist of “top ten” systematic reviews / RCTs on a topic, selected by ISBT members. ISBT has also participated in the African Union Development Agency AUDA-NEPAD partnership platform to support the Africa Blood Regulators Forum.

Some early but positive talks with the European Haematology Association (EHA) have taken place, besides having a joint session at the ISBT 2022 congress.

There has been a lot of interaction with the World Health Organization (WHO) for example, workshops such as access to PDMP in LMIC, and developing/collating Haemovigilance tools to make haemovigilance materials more widely accessible. ISBT also supported 2021 World Blood Donor Day (WBDD) which was

held in Rome, where Erica took part in the ceremony and other ISBT members participated in the related symposium on-line.

ISBT has maintained positive working relations with our Corporate Partners (CPs) in 2021-22 (Roche, Abbott, Grifols, Quotient, Immucor, Terumo, Ortho, Biomérieux, Cerus, Sysmex, Glycorex and Diasorin) and welcomed Fresenius Kabi who joined us at the start of this year. Erica thanked all the CPs for their support.

Most society meetings during 2021-2022 took place virtually: ISBT board, Academy Standing Committee, Vox Sanguinis Standing Committee, ISBT Foundation, ISAC, Working Party business meetings, and many more.

ISBT hoped to have an ISBT regional congress in Milan in June 2021, and we appreciate the efforts of the Italian National Society (SIMTI) and the Milan Local Organising Committee (LOC). Clearly that was not possible at the time, but we do look forward to going back to Milan in the near future. A similar situation happened with Brisbane and the support from the Australian & New Zealand Society for Blood Transfusion (ANZSBT) and the Brisbane Local Organising Committee (LOC) is also appreciated. As an interim step, we will be having a series of haemovigilance webinars using material originally planned with the Australian National Blood authority as a satellite educational day at the Brisbane congress.

A virtual congress "ISBT In Focus" was held in June 2021. This was a very successful meeting in terms of attendance, content and logistics, and an opportunity to try something different with extended time zones and interactive live sessions provided by the ISBT working parties. 1008 delegates from 77 countries attended; there were nine scientific sessions, 16 interactive working party sessions, two Young Professional networking meetings, 19 invited speakers, 286 e-posters, 10 exhibiting companies and nine sponsored sessions. She particularly thanked the ISBT Central Office team and MCI for all the work behind the scenes.

### **3. Report of the Secretary General (Gwen Clarke)**

Gwen noted that there was a dip in membership during COVID-19, when face-to-face congresses were not possible. An increase in membership is expected as soon as we go back to in-person meetings. The core group of around 1400-1500 people has been maintained throughout the years since 2012-13. The ISBT membership has also continued to extend to all WHO regions.

Additional on-line events were held, including 11 webinars in 2021-22, six of which were ISBT Corporate Partners. Also, six very well-attended Live Journal Club webinars and a three-day virtual PDMP in LMIC workshop with the Global Blood Safety Working Party.

One of the major projects in 2021-22 has been the development of the new ISBT website, and Gwen invited members to explore it. It includes a reorganization of ISBT Education and a new "resources library". In the background, there was a refresh of the e-learning platform to reorganize it in March and subsequently a transfer of the e-learning platform to a new website.

The look and feel of the Vox Sanguinis journal have been updated and Vox has moved to 12 issues per year. The Vox editors participated in a very innovative and successful mentorship programme with a number of young professionals related to the editorial process. Gwen added that ISBT Science Series has been incorporated into *Vox Sanguinis* with the last separate edition of the Science Series published in

late 2021. Gwen thanked Pieter van der Meer for his long and excellent service to the Society leading the ISBT Science Series. Pieter has now joined the *Vox Sanguinis* Editorial Board. She added that the section editors of the Science Series are now section editors of *Vox Sanguinis*.

The *Vox Sanguinis* Best Paper Prize 2020 (awarded in June 2021) was given to Nilam S. Mangalmurti for the paper “RAGE interacts with the necroptotic protein RIPK3 and mediates transfusion-induced danger signal release” by Hilary Faust, LK Metthew Lam, Meghan J. Hotz, Danielle Qing & Nilam S. Mangalmurti. Gwen congratulated them all.

Gwen showed a list 15 Working Parties and their chairpersons. This includes a new WP for Blood Components, chaired by Denese Marks from Australia, and created to respond to a gap in ISBT WP coverage. It was launched in mid-2021 and activities that it will undertake are still in development.

Details of the Academy events that the ISBT Foundation has supported in 2021-22 were shown, including events in Pakistan, Tunisia, India, and Australia.

#### **4. Retiring Working Party Chairpersons and Standing Committee members**

Gwen thanked Cynthia So-Osman for her service as Chair of the Clinical Transfusion WP and Ulrich Sachs and Nelson Tsuno from the Platelet Immunobiology WP. Also, Arwa Al-Riyami, Satyam Arora and Tyler Hutchinson are retiring as Standing Committee members of the Young Professional Council. She thanked them all for all their hard work and support during this time.

#### **5. Report of the Treasurer (Eric Jansen) – motion to accept financial accounts**

Eric presented the finance report outlining the financial highlights of 2021-22. He mentioned that there is still a high impact of COVID-19 on the finances, but there are also some positive consequences in the finances.

The ISBT In Focus virtual congress was very successful and we had a €77,000 refund of the Barcelona congress venue in 2021-22. The total income was €65,000 lower than the year before where insurance was received for cancellation of the Barcelona congress. The total expenses are similar compared to 2020-21 but remain low as traveling was not possible.

He also mentioned that we heavily invested the last two years in implementing our strategy by spending €100,000 on education / e-learning and €40,000 to support the Blood Group Allele database.

The total finance result is still positive: €136,000. He mentioned that there was a donation made to the ISBT Foundation, but in the future, we want to change the tax rulings with the Dutch tax authorities. Currently, we do not pay profit tax on the surplus that is donated to the ISBT Foundation. He explained that the income fluctuates between years, so we need to be able to use profits to progress our strategic plan. Pending discussions with the Dutch tax authorities, we intend to start paying profit tax in 2022 and offset this against years where we make a loss. The automatic donation of the surplus to the ISBT Foundation would end but ISBT would structurally donate funds to the ISBT Foundation as required to enable them to continue their good work.

Regarding the income statement of 2021-22, Eric mentioned that the major income sources have been the congress, followed by *Vox Sanguinis*, Corporate Partners and the membership fees. Normally, the virtual congresses revenue is lower compared to the face-to-face ones, but this time was not the case

due to the refund and insurance received from the Barcelona cancellation. Eric mentioned that insurance has changed once the pandemic began and it was not possible to insure the Milan nor Brisbane congresses in the same way.

A graph showing the income sources from 2018 to 2022 was shown. Eric explained that the income from congresses fluctuates heavily and is currently on the lower level due to the lack of face-to-face congresses. This is another reason changing the tax position would be helpful.

The expenditure statement appeared on the screen and Eric noted that there are no major changes between this and last year regarding membership benefits costs, personnel, and professional expenses. Nevertheless, the promotion expenses have increased in 2022 because it was decided to invest in a new ISBT website and new office systems. Eric mentioned that travel costs are usually around €100,000 and this is expected to return next year. In total, he explained that the costs are higher than last year, but a positive result remains.

In the financial highlights from 2018 to 2022 we can see that the donation to the ISBT Foundation varies every year. In the balance sheet we can see that the accumulated surplus is a bit below three million, and most of it is in cash. The interest rate in 2021-2022 was low or negative so the capital is not growing, this will change with rising interest rates.

Eric asked if there were questions regarding the financial statement – no questions were asked. A recommendation to accept the financial statement was proposed by John Semple and seconded by Diana Teo. A poll appeared on the screen for ISBT members to vote: ***Do you accept the financial accounts 2021- 2022?*** With 98% of the 94 voting members selecting “Yes” the financial statement was accepted.

## **6. Membership fees 2023/24**

Eric showed a graph with the current fees in 2022-2023 and a proposal to increase them in 2023-24. The small percentage increase would only be for high-income and upper-middle income countries. The fees for lower-middle and low-income countries would remain the same.

The reasons for changing the fees for 2023-24 is because there has not been any change in membership fees for five years. To avoid heavy increases at once, small increases are suggested. Inflation in Europe and worldwide is very high, so our costs will increase by over 10%. Besides that, the budget for 2022-23 has a deficit of €207,000 without accounting for buying the Blood Group Allele database as we continue with our strategic plan.

Eric asked if anyone has any questions regarding membership fees. Mathias Johnson asked that if we increase the membership fees, do we expect that some people will stop being ISBT members? Eric replied that we will not know if this will happen because the increases are rather moderate, but if it does, it will represent a very small percentage of the current membership.

Aikaj Jindal asked if there is an option for payment instalments. Jenny White replied that, although this is not in the plan for this year, it is possible to do so with the new office system.

Diana Teo asked about the Blood Group Allele database purchase. Eric mentioned that the current Blood Group Allele tables are not yet a database per se, but PDF documents. The aim is to make it into a more accessible electronic resource. Eric explained that a member of the Red Cell Immunogenetics and Blood Group Terminology working party (RCI & BGT WP) made a database and presented it to the WP two

years ago. Since last year negotiations have been taking place for ISBT to purchase the database. Some legal issues have still to be finalized.

Zbigniew Szczepiorkowski asked if we are planning to allow pre-payment of membership before the 1st of January, as the current system does not allow it. Jenny explained that one of the proposals at this General Assembly is to change the ISBT statutes and bylaws. This change would include having a rolling membership so people can join anytime during the year; this item is yet to be discussed in the following agenda item.

Kamini Khillan suggested not raising the membership fees for lower-middle income countries as inflation has significantly hit these countries too. Eric mentioned that the board had the same discussion and concluded that the income increase is small for these countries and that the structure should remain. Pankaj Kumar asked if it is possible to keep the fees the same as before. Eric said that it is possible, but then the ISBT finances will face a problem in the future. He concluded that the proposal is for a minimal increase to the fees, but the membership can vote to accept or reject it.

In summary, there is no change in fees for people in low-income countries and for people under 35 in lower-middle income countries. There is only a €5 increase for others in low and lower-middle income countries and a €5 to maximum €15 increase for the rest.

Carolina Triplett wondered if the increased fees would bring new member benefits. ISBT is heavily investing in education and that changes in membership benefits will be clear overtime, including investments in the education platform and website. There were no further questions asked.

The motion to change the membership fees for 2023-24 was proposed by Margaret Keller and seconded by Aikaj Jindal. A poll appeared on the screen for ISBT members to vote: ***Do you accept the proposed increase in membership fees for 2023-24?*** With 76% of the 104 voting members selecting “Yes” the new membership fees for 2023-24 were accepted.

## **7. Proposed changes to ISBT statutes and bylaws (Gwen Clarke)**

Gwen discussed a number of proposed changes to the ISBT Statutes and Bylaws and explained the reasons for these. The first was to comply with a number of mandatory management and supervision act legal entities (‘Wet Bestuur en Toezicht Rechtspersonen’) in the Netherlands which is where the Society is incorporated. These became effective on July 1, 2021, with the expectation that entities would make changes to their statutes and bylaws as other changes were required.

Secondly to facilitate members joining with an annual ‘rolling membership’ rather than a fixed membership year. That means that members could join ISBT anytime of the year and the membership will last for 1 year from that date. This will benefit members and the society as it should make it attractive to join throughout the year and stabilise membership throughout the year.

Other changes are to reflect updated working practices and use of digital communications.

Another reason is to reduce the delay in electing board members in the event of a tie. So, in this case, the election period could be shorter rather than the 2 months stated in the current statutes and bylaws. Finally, but not least, a change is proposed to focus “exempt membership” on those from low and middle-income countries.

Gwen noted that the suggested changes were circulated with the agenda days prior the General Assembly. There is an additional change which was omitted from the copy that was sent out: By Laws in section 9, top of page 6, under the fee section, there is a sentence that is planned to be deleted, shown as a track change in the version they received. This is at the end of the bullet point that reads: *low middle or upper-middle categories of the role bank development index...* the rest of the paragraph relating the % of exempt memberships in high income countries would also be deleted in the proposed new version as it is no longer relevant. Gwen apologised for this inconsistency. She asked if there are any questions regarding the Statutes and Bylaws.

There was one comment from Jo Wiersum: The Statutes and By-laws do not mention sending a reminder for renewal before someone is erased. Gwen mentioned that this is an updated reward of our new system and highlighted that there will be automatic reminders sent out as the membership is ending, and an extra reminder before the membership is removed from the system.

The motion to agree with the changes to the ISBT statutes was proposed by Jill Storry and seconded by Aikaj Jindal. A poll appeared on the screen for ISBT members to vote: ***Do you accept the proposed changes to the ISBT Statutes as described at this meeting and previously circulated in full with the meeting agenda?*** With 95% of the 93 voting members selecting "Yes" the motion was passed.

The motion to agree with changes to the ISBT Bylaws was proposed by Justina Ansah and seconded by Diana Teo. A poll appeared on the screen for ISBT members to vote: ***Do you accept the proposed changes to the ISBT Bylaws?*** With 94% of the 94 voting members selecting "Yes" the motion was passed.

## **8. Retiring Board Directors**

Erica Wood thanked the retiring board members for all their hard work. She mentioned that it has been a pleasure working with everybody on the board under very difficult and unexpected circumstances. The retiring board members are the following:

Martin Olsson (Past President)

Masja de Haas (Senior Vice President)

May Raouf (Regional Director, East Mediterranean)

Birgit Gathof (Regional Director, Europe)

Mindy Goldman (Regional Director, North Americas)

Lilian Castilho (Regional Director, South Americas)

Veera Sekaran Nadarajan (Regional Director, Western Pacific)

## **9. Announcement of the new Board 2022**

Erica thanked everybody who stood for election, which is also a sign of major commitment to the Society and is highly appreciated. As already announced to the members via email, we had a tie for the Regional Director North Americas position and a follow-up election will shortly take place. With the changes to the timeframe of the election, we should be able to do this quite promptly now. Erica thanked the candidates for their patience.

Erica congratulated the new elected board members and highlighted that Gwen Clarke was re-elected for the Secretary-General position. She explained that Michael Busch will take over as the President and she will now remain in the board as the Past President. She thanked all the board for all their support during the time she was President during such an unexpected time. She also thanked all the ISBT members including all the working party members.

The new board is as follows:

Michael Busch	President
Pierre Tiberghien	President Elect*
Erica Wood	Past President
Lin Fung	Vice President
Jill Storry	Vice President*
Gwen Clarke	Secretary General**
Eric Jansen	Treasurer
TBC	North America*
Jose Levi	South America*
Cynthia So-Osman	Europe
Christian Erikstrup	Europe*
Maha Badawi	Eastern Mediterranean*
Shirley Owusu Ofori	Africa
Mahrukh Getshen	South East Asia
Denese Marks	Western Pacific
Nelson Tsuno	Western Pacific*

* = newly elected
** = re-elected

### 10. Incoming President's address

Michael Busch recognized and thanked Erica for her outstanding leadership during these most difficult years. He explained that he has been an ISBT member for almost 30 years and served in many roles including the TTID working party chair, and is very grateful and honoured to become the ISBT President for the next two years. He anticipates ongoing support from Jenny, the fabulous team in the ISBT Central Office and the outstanding new board. He appreciates the board and the working party leaders for the ongoing commitment to the Society.

He mentioned that the new board will be meeting in Amsterdam in late June where the focus will be on the strategic plan set in 2019 which will now need review and reprioritisation following the pandemic. Attention will be paid to lessons learned from many of the working parties during the pandemic that have impacted on blood bank organizations, scientific practice and transfusion medicine throughout the world. He mentioned that some ISBT working parties have developed concepts for tool kits to be prepared for future outbreaks and pandemics.

Michael is also personally interested in the application of national and international registries, donor and recipient databases, and repositories to support rigorous analysis of blood collection processing, testing, utilization, advocacy and safety, all toward the vision of a precision and personalized transfusion medicine. So, these are the two areas that he is committed to progressing over the next two years.

#### **11. Any other business and general Q&A**

Jo Wiersum asked: Can you say something about policies to make the Society's activity more (ecologically) sustainable? Jenny answered that this is something the Society has been thinking about even before the pandemic. ISBT intends to some of the positives from what we have learned throughout the pandemic as an organization, such as virtual meetings when possible and reserve travel for when it is really necessary. All office policies and contracts are being reviewed, and we will look at what we can do to not waste anything in our central organization. Jenny said that any suggestions are welcome. Michael added that virtual congresses have been outstanding not only in terms of science and interactions, but also in regard of the platform. And although, we are all looking forward to in-person meetings, we will continue to make available options for virtual participation and many of the board meetings and working party activities will continue to utilize these virtual tools and resources which will not only save money and increase productivity but will also address the issues of traveling and ecological sustainability, and thanked Jo for her question.

Pankaj Kumar Das asked: Is lifetime membership possible? Jenny mentioned that the Honorary Membership offered by ISBT is a lifetime membership. This is granted to those who have given exceptional service to the Society, often Past Presidents. In terms of a lifetime fee, Jenny mentioned that there are no current plans for this, but she suggested that this item could be discussed during the strategic meeting with the board.

#### **12. Announcement of the date of the next General Assembly**

The next General Assembly is planned to take place on Tuesday June 20, 2023, in Gothenburg, Sweden. Michael mentioned that more information about the next congress will be shared at the closing ceremony of ISBT 2022.

#### **13. Close of meeting**

Michael thanked all the people involved in organizing this online General Assembly and thanked the members present for attending, proposing, seconding and voting.