



International Affairs Committee (IAC) – Botanical Society of America

IAC Report of Activities July 2020-July 202 for Annual virtual meeting July 22, 2021

Membership:

- Hugo Cota-Sánchez, Chair (2022)
- Carol Siniscalchi (2022)
- Ceclila Zumajo, Student Representative (2022)
- Johanne Brunet (2023)
- Suman Neupane (2023)
- Shengchen Shan (2004)
- Heather Cacanindin, Executive Director, ex officio
- Melanie Link-Perez, (2023) Program Director, ex officio
- Michael Donoghue (2022), President, ex officio

Activities:

- Members of the IAC met on June 16, 2021, after a relatively long period, in part due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The minutes of the aforementioned meeting are included following this report.
- As indicated in the minutes, in that meeting several actions were taken, including:
 - To disregard an email from a Senior Consultant of the Saudi Arabian Botanical Society requesting partnership with BSA,
 - IAC mission, future directions and regular committee meetings, and
 - Updating (in progress) a list of botanical organizations around the world that can be contacted to establish new links or partnerships. The updated document is available on Google at:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WopQxcg2k6XcRdi6OXOAKRIHwWSP3IR8sKoc5PrQfsQ/edit>.
- Other suggested activities for next year included the involvement of the IAC/BSA in planning and outreach in different forthcoming international events, including the International Botanical Congress, the Congreso Latinoamericano de Botánica, The Canadian Botanical Association, the Congreso Mexicano de Botánica, and the Brazilian Botanical Congress.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Hugo Cota-Sánchez
Chair – IAC/BSA

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**MINUTES OF THE INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, 2021, AT 11:00 A.M. CENTRAL VIA ZOOM**

Present: Hugo Cota-Sánchez (Chair), Carol Siniscalchi, Cecilia Zumajo (Student Representative), Johanne Brunet, Suman Neupane, Shengchen Shan, Heather Cacanindin (Executive Director, ex officio), Melanie Link-Perez (Program Director, ex officio). Quorum met.

Start time: 11:03 am

1. Approval of Agenda

- MOTION: Johanne/Melanie to approve proposed agenda → Carried

2. Chair Remarks

- The Chair welcomed members and thanked them for the service and time devoted to the BSA and IAC.
- The Chair thanked Heather for her administrative support, for facilitating the meeting and for making available previous information associated with the IAC.
- This was followed by a period of personal introductions.

3. Email correspondence and MOU request from Saudi Arabia

- There was a discussion about an email sent by Joshua Van Alstine, co-founder and Senior Consultant of the Saudi Arabian Botanical Society (SABS), on May 18, 2021, to BSA affiliates. This email request is looking to establish a network and official relationships with BSA.
- Several members of the BSA/IAC looked for more information about the SABS, but limited details exist on the Internet and social media. There is webpage for the SABS (<https://www.saudibotanicalsociety.org/home>), including a short description and mission of the SABS. In addition, six Board members are listed, but none of the names have substantial background information. In fact, the links in those names take to commercial pages, which raised concerns among the IAC members.
- Suman has an academic connection in Saudi Arabia, i.e., Dr. Hanan Almahasheer, Assistant professor of plant ecology at Imam Abdul Rahman bin Faisal University (<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Hanan-Almahasheer>). Later after the IAC meeting, Suman contacted this professor inquiring details and/or background about the person signing the request and about the official function of the SABS and its members as non-profit or profitable organization.
- In his email conversation with Suman, Dr. Almahasheer adds: *“I’m not aware of this society or these people, and am not sure which university they belong to or where they teach as doctors or maybe assistant professor, not clear to me.”*
- In view that the identity of the person requesting networking with BSA can’t be verified in conjunction with a confirmable operating SABS, the Chair of the IAC put forward (via email) the following motion for members approval: MOTION: “to disregard the request from the SABS and its contact person.”
- The motion passed unanimously; hence, the case was closed. Other actions may be considered in the event of a second email request from the lead person of the SABS.

4. IAC mission, partnerships, and future directions

- **IAC mission:** A discussion about the IAC took place. The purpose was to highlight the main goals of the IAC so that the membership could align with them accordingly as new activities are undertaken.
- Some concern was expressed regarding the role of the Chair of the IAC for a single year. The current chair indicated that it could be challenging especially when there is no sufficient information available about previous meetings and activities. Heather Cacanindin indicated that part of this is because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which also affected other BSA committees and activities.
- Members agreed that it is important to generate minutes of the meetings as well as an annual report. The information in such documents would be beneficial for continuity and stability of tasks in progress and it will be useful not only for the new Chair but also for new members to become familiar and understand previous and current activities of the IAC.
- The number of IAC members was another item for discussion. It was recommended that most, if not all, large geographic regions of the world should be represented in the group. At present, the IAC is missing representatives from Europe, Africa, and Australasia. It was suggested that one or two additional members from unrepresented regions would be an asset.
- Other issues discussed evolved about communication and visibility aspects of the IAC. Among these, the possibility of creating an email account for the IAC, but several disadvantages were identified in addition that at present, email communication is handled and funneled to committee chairs by the BSA administrative office. Also, the prospect of creating a webpage for the IAC was brought to discussion by Shengchen, who would set it up. However, the drawback would be that it would disconnect from the main BSA webpage. Finally, the IAC may pursue the possibility of including a call for future national and international events in which the group could enhance the BSA network and committee visibility.

- **Partnerships**
- A preliminary document listing botanical organizations was provided by the Chair so that IAC members can add other plant societies not yet included. This will be an evolving file as more opportunities for networking are discovered. The document was made available on Google (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WopQxcg2k6XcRdi6OXOAKRIHwWSP3IR8sKoc5PrQfsQ/edit>) by Shengchen. Members will have two-weeks to add updates, but suggestions are always welcome. The document will be made available as part of the annual report to the BSA Board of Directors, prior to Botany 2021.

- **Future directions / activities**
- This discussion explored the possibilities of engaging in potential collaborative events at different events. The following options, in chronological order, have been added to the IAC agenda of activities:
 1. The next annual meeting of the Canadian Botanical Society/Association Botanique du Canada will take place in June or July 2022 – venue/city TBD. Cota-Sánchez and Johanne Brunet will act as a link and will contact the CBA and researchers with specific requests as needed.

2. The Congreso Mexicano de Botánica is held every three years. It will take place again in the fall of 2022. Although the location is yet TBD, Cota-Sánchez will get in touch with the director of the Sociedad Mexicana de Botánica and organizers.
3. The XIII Congreso Latinoamericano de Botánica organized by the Sociedad Latinoamericana de Botánica, to be held in Cuba in 2023. Cecilia Zumajo would be the liaison with SLB.
4. The International Botanical Congress scheduled to be held in Brazil in 2023, was recently cancelled. As a result, the Sociedad Botánica Española (SEBOT) and the Real Jardín Botánico de Madrid (RJBM), will be hosting this event in 2024. Shengchen Shan and possibly other(s) IAC member(s) will be the contact person(s).
5. Brazilian Botanical Congress organized by the Sociedade Botânica do Brasil (SBB). This conference is held annually, usually in September/October. The 2021 edition was held online in June, but in 2022 will probably be in person again. Contacts at SBB reported that at the moment there is no organization committee or venue confirmed. Carolina Siniscalchi will act as liaison with SBB to organize a joint event in the next conference.

5. Other business

- None

6. Next meeting

- Committee members suggested 3-4 meetings annually.
- Regular meetings will be useful to keep track and move the IAC activities forward.
- Next meeting was proposed for October 2021. Specific date TBD.
- Call for next meeting will be made by the Chair and/or H. Cacanindin.

Meeting adjourned at 12:15 pm Central time.

Minutes prepared by H. Cota-Sánchez, June 21, 2021