

INTERNATIONAL GEMMOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

History

The International Gemmological Conference owes much to BIBOA (Bureau International pour la Bijouterie, Orfevererie, Argenterie), the International jewellery and gemstone federation whose first Congress in 1926 recommended the designation Cultured pearl.

Experts from various European Gem Testing Laboratories attended various meetings of experts that helped to formulate the policies of BIBOA. In 1936 a fifth conference of expert took place. The collaboration among laboratories was acclaimed by traders and they encouraged Laboratory Directors to meet each other during 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 London Congress. At this scientific meeting: Prof. Schlossmacher, Mr. B. W. Anderson, Mr. G. Gobel, Dr. E. Gubelin, Mr. F. Wolff, Mr. A. Bonebakker, Mr. H. Tillander, Mr. Stromdahl and Mr. O. Dragstead. It is said that the future framework of IGC was established at this meeting.

The London Congress saw the restructuring of BIBOA in which the Gemmological Associations were replaced by National Federal Committees, and the organization became BIBOAH and then the present trade organisation CIBJO.

A technical conference met at Locarno from 23rd to 25th October 1952 at the initiatives of Prof. Schlossmacher and Dr. Gubelin. Present at the conference were also, B.W. Anderson, A. Bonebakker, O. Dragstead, G. Gobel, K. Siess and H. Tillander. At this meeting Dr. E. Gubelin proposed the creation of a 'Committee of an International Gemmological Conference', consisting of one member per country, this member being the director of a laboratory or a gemmologist such as present at that meeting. This was agreed and the meeting was later considered to be the first International Gemmological Conference (IGC).

This first IGC has been followed by Conferences 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 (1972), Washington D.C. (1975), The Hague (1977), Idar Oberstein (1979), Kashiko-Jima (1981), Beruwela (1983), Sydney (1985), Rio de Janeiro (1987), Tremezzo (1989), Stellenboch (1991), Paris (1993), Bangkok (1995), Idar Obertein (1997), Bombay (1999), and Madrid (2001).

It can therefore be seen that the International Gemmological Conference is the longest surviving conference in the field to remain in its original format. In its history, invited delegates have been present from 33 countries – Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, 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, Taiwan, Thailand, U.S.A. and Zimbabwe.

During the 20th Conference that was held in Sydney, Australia, nine Honorary members were elected by the members present. These are Oliver Chalmers (Australia), Prof. A. Chikayama (Japan), 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.), Dr. J.M. Saul (Kenya).

At the same meeting the following rules were agreed for future meetings.

1. Prime objective: The exchange of gemmological experiences.
2. Gemmology to be the platform for all topics and to be regarded as the principal theme.
3. It was decided that attendance at all further Conferences should be by invitation and determined where necessary by the secretary plus the Executive Committee.
4. All delegates to be encouraged to present papers. It will not be mandatory.
5. All delegates must have a publishing record and all papers to be presented in English, whether written or spoken.
6. The Conference to keep foremost in mind the prime objectives and avoid dilution/confusion of this objective which, if not maintained, could result in a blank organisation without true status or credibility.
7. Keep peripheral commercial activity to a minimum; 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.

The Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is in existence to offer guidance to the organizers of each conference and in particular to vet the list of those to be invited. The members responsible for the organisation of the current conference and the members responsible for the immediately previous conference are co-opted to the committee during the these time periods. The current members are:

Dr. E. Gubelin (Switzerland), Mr. A. Jobbin (England), Prof. I. Sunagawa (Japan), Mr. J. Koivula (U.S.A.), Dr. G. Brown (Australia), Mr. J. P. Poirot (France), Prof. H. Bank (Germany), Dr. Jayshree Panjekar (India).