



Study of Religion  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

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To the Members of the International Association of Buddhist Studies

*Re.: Postponement of the XIXth Conference of the IABS to 2022*

March 6, 2021

Dear Members of the International Association of Buddhist Studies,

Almost one entire year has passed since you received my letter announcing the postponement of the XIXth Conference of the IABS, from August 2020 to August 2021. The date envisaged back then has now moved close enough for me to reach out to you again. In the last 12 months and depending on where you may be living, you too will have seen many ups and downs and while we now have more reason to believe that things will improve in the not too distant future, we are still far from being able to plan our lives and our work as we used to before the world changed so dramatically. Let me tell you that your health and well-being has continued to be of great concern to both the IABS Board of Directors and the conference's organizers. As have others, our academic community too has suffered tremendously. Several of us have either lost loved ones and close colleagues due to the virus itself or have mourned their loss under the terrible conditions created by the disease. Our thoughts are with you in what remain very difficult times.

What we now know is that our previous assessment, that we may all meet in Seoul this summer, turned out to be overly optimistic. After following very closely the developments throughout the world and upon careful deliberation, the IABS Board of Directors and the conference's convener Professor Eun-su Cho, together with her team, have come to the conclusion, which many of you too may have already anticipated: that the environment predicted for August of this year is still not safe enough to hold a conference in a way that would satisfy us all. This means that the XIXth Conference of the IABS will not be held this year either and will be postponed to August 2022. Though the expectations of all of us have already been lowered considerably by the information that we keep receiving through the media and by our shared experience, this has still been no easy decision. However, the continuing high rate of infections across the globe, the uneven pace of vaccine distribution, the heavy restrictions on international travel, and the unpredictability conditioned by the advent of new variant strains - four factors that are likely to persist throughout the summer and beyond - have left us with no other viable option.

The convener Professor Cho has decided on August 14-19, 2022 as the new date for the XIXth Conference of the IABS. Arrangements will be made by the convener to guarantee that the conference's programming will be sensitive to the changes to research projects and presentation plans that will inevitably have occurred since the first round of submissions roughly two years ago. In the communication from the conference convener you will be receiving shortly, prospective panel conveners and session presenters will be asked to either reconfirm their participation or to notify the convener in the unfortunate case that they may decide to withdraw their submission. The

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organizers will need to receive this update by April 1, 2021. Once the situation has been assessed, the convener will send out a call for new panel and section paper proposals for a possible inclusion in the programme. Panel conveners and section paper presenters who have already been accepted and who have reconfirmed their participation will then have the opportunity to submit changed titles and abstracts. Both kinds of submission, the new ones and the updates of the old ones, will be due by August 1, 2021. Please remain posted for the upcoming communications from the convener.

We recognize that changes in research agendas or other circumstances, and the challenges posed by the unpredictable situation, might now make it difficult for some members to meet their original commitment to attend and present at the conference. At the same time, we would like to urge as many members as possible to participate, in order to ensure that, conditions notwithstanding, our meeting is just as substantial and lively as ever.

Let me express, on behalf of the IABS Board of Directors, our utmost respect, admiration, and gratefulness to Professor Cho and her team. There are no words to describe the resilience, patience, strength, and forbearance it takes to sustain such a prolonged effort, to live through so much uncertainty, and to keep the promise of hosting us all for so much longer than anyone of us expected. The IABS Board members, including myself, would like to express their gratitude to Professor Cho and our Korean colleagues for having managed the first postponement so impeccably and for being willing to shoulder yet another year of delay, with all the additional unexpected work this involves and under the harshest possible circumstances. Our Korean colleagues' unwavering commitment to the hospitality they are willing to offer deserves our highest praise.

Let me not end without expressing my deepest regrets to you for us not being able to get together for yet another year. I truly hope that you all will do as well as circumstances allow for in the months that lie ahead of us and that we will all be able to look back at this disconcerting period with a renewed sense of community when we assemble again in Seoul in 2022.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ang P. ...', written in a cursive style.

General Secretary, IABS