Coronavirus (COVID-19) alert for organizers of international events

On 30 January 2020, the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

We are all extremely concerned about the spread of coronavirus, and there are understandable concerns for those organizing international conferences, or planning to attend them. Our advice to Associations for international travel and the organization of conferences is given below.

Check the international advice from the WHO which is being regularly updated: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public and https://www.who.int/ith/2019-nCoV_advice_for_international_traffic-rev/en/. At the moment 'WHO continues to advise against the application of travel or trade restrictions to countries experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks.' But of course this situation can change. Be aware of any advice issued by governments of your own country, and of the country to which you may be planning to travel.

If your Association is organizing a conference or other international event:

1. Assess the impact of this virus on the viability of any conference you are planning/organizing. Monitor registration rates, compare against what you would normally expect, and any cancellations. Low registration rates can be an early signal of an event being at risk and possibly not being viable.
2. Undertake regular reviews of the continued viability of a conference.
3. Determine the key decision date postponing or canceling of an event.
4. Review when local contracts (for venues, hotels, logistic services and staff hire) are due to be confirmed.
5. Contracts already entered into should be examined to see the liability an association might incur in case of cancellation. Such costs should normally be met through reserves. This is an element to take into consideration when deciding the size of the reserves. We recommend that all sponsoring organizations maintain a reserve that exceeds the liability they might have if a meeting was cancelled.

Please share this information with your executive committees, conference organizers and anyone concerned.