

10th International Antarctic Conference dedicated to the 25th Anniversary of
raising of the National Flag of Ukraine
at Ukrainian Antarctic Akademik Vernadsky station
May 11-13, 2021, Kyiv, Ukraine

Organization Report

This report captures experiences and lessons learned from 10 IAC 2021 Online (www.uac.gov.ua), held virtually on May 11-13, 2021. The report is based on the first-hand experiences of the 10 IAC 2021 Online organizers, and individual feedback from chairs and attendees.

Background

Since 2002, the State Institution National Antarctic Scientific Center (NASC) has held a biennial International Antarctic Conference to discuss the results of studies carried out within the framework of the State Special-Purpose Research Program in Antarctica for 2011-2023 (<http://uac.gov.ua/en/research-program-en/>) at Ukrainian Antarctic Akademik Vernadsky station. It is an opportunity for Ukrainian and foreign scientists carrying out Antarctic research to come together, to participate in conference sessions and round-table discussions.

With cases of COVID-19 increasing worldwide throughout 2020, it became clear that the in-person meeting could not be possible and the Organizing Committee has started preparation of online conference.

Organization

10 IAC 2021 Online is built upon the efforts of the Scientific and Organizing Committees, the work of which was gratefully acknowledged by the participants.

Scientific Committee:

Dr Serhiy Shkarlet – Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine, Head of the Committee;

Dr Valentyna Malanchuk – NASC Scientific Secretary, Secretary of the Committee;

Dr Serhiy Komisarenko – Director of O.V. Palladin Institute of Biochemistry NAS and NAMS of Ukraine;

Dr Vitalii Starostenko – Director of S.I. Subbotin Institute of Geophysics NAS of Ukraine;

Dr Yuri Yampolski – Principal Scientist of the Institute of Radio Astronomy NAS of Ukraine;

Dr Iryna Kozeretska – NASC Deputy Director for Science;

Dr Viktor Kunakh – Head of Department of the Institute of Molecular Biology and Genetics NAS of Ukraine;

Dr Oleksii Savchuk – Professor of the ESC “Institute of Biology and Medicine”, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv;

Dr Gennady Milinevsky – Head of the Research Laboratory, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv;

Dr Volodymyr Bakhmutov – Head of Department of the S.I. Subbotin Institute of Geophysics NAS of Ukraine;

Dr Svitlana Krakovksa – Head of Laboratory of the Ukrainian Meteorological Institute, State Emergency Service and NAS of Ukraine;

Dr Andrii Zalizovski – Head of Department of the Institute of Radio Astronomy NAS of Ukraine;

Viktor Komorin – Director of the Research Institution “Ukrainian Scientific Center of Ecology of Sea”;

Dr Peter Convey – British Antarctic Survey, Natural Environment Research Council, United Kingdom;

Yuriy Giginyak – Principal Scientist of the State Scientific and Production Association “Scientific Research Center of the National Academy of Sciences for Bioresources”, Belarus.

Organizing Committee:

Dr Evgen Dykyi – NASC Director, Head of the Committee;

Valeria Savchenko – NASC Research Officer, Secretary of the Committee;

Yuliia Kryvytska – Head of Department, NASC;

Dr Andriy Fedchuk – Head of Department, NASC;

Dr Larysa Bakhmutova – NASC Research Officer;

Dr Oksana Pnyovska – NASC Head of Department;

Maria Chernyshenko – NASC Research Officer;

Olena Piankova – NASC Technical Specialist,

Oleksandra Denysiuk – NASC Research Officer.

The following actions were taken to organize the 10th IAC 2021 Online:

- Decision to run the conference based on Zoom.
- Confirmed and invited speakers to the Plenary Session and four other sessions.
 - A book of abstracts was produced of all accepted abstracts that were submitted to the conference.
 - Authors of accepted abstracts were invited to share material for view and comment before and after the meeting, as well as to present in an online poster session.
 - Chairs of the parallel sessions were given the option to run a text-based chat session during the conference.
 - Session chairs, coordinators, moderators and technical assistants were identified for key events.
 - Running of training sessions with every speaker to familiarize them with the online interface.

Program

10 IAC 2021 Online consisted of the Plenary Session, Life Sciences Session, Earth Sciences Session, Physical Sciences Session, New Technologies and Equipment Session and a round-table discussion organized as part of the Life Sciences Session. Each session included oral and poster sessions.

- 3 welcome addresses from dignitaries
- 11 key speakers
- 4 poster events
- 1 round-table discussion
- 109 virtual displays

Registration for the conference and access to the platform was free for registered participants. Each session consisted of presenters, a chair, a moderator and an invisible technical host. A session coordinator was responsible for communication with the presenters and chairs in the run-up to the event. Attendees were encouraged to use the chat of the platform during the sessions. Presentations were spread across different time zones to account for an international audience. Almost all participants stated the timing of the events worked well for them, and only a minor percent of participants remarked the timing was not satisfied and asked to change the time of their presentations. Recordings of the events were later made available on www.uac.gov.ua.

All sessions worked very well and received extremely positive feedback from the attendees.

Overall, registered participants noted that they were satisfied with the quality of presentations held during the conference. Participants were also satisfied with the discussions around the presentations. Scientists from Ukraine, USA, Great Britain, Malaysia, Latvia and the Republic of Belarus presented their research results carried out in 99 leading laboratories, scientific institutions and centers of twenty countries of the world (the list is [here](#)).

Communication

The main channels of communications with attendees for 10 IAC 2021 Online were the website (www.uac.gov.ua) and email.

Participants

A total of 135 participants registered for 10 IAC 2021 Online.

Based on the Participant's Feedback Survey, the following picture emerged:

- 5 speakers were currently a master student.
- 31 speakers were currently a PhD student.
- The majority of participants worked in Antarctic Research or a related discipline, out of which 53 speakers worked in a Life Sciences discipline, 28 in Physical Sciences, 17 in Earth Sciences and 6 in New Technologies and Equipment Sciences discipline.

- We were also pleased to see that educators, government/policy stakeholders and interested laypeople attended the conference.

Summary and Recommendations

Moving 10 IAC 2021 Online was a major undertaking, but also a very positive experience for the Antarctic Science Community and the organizers. Given the circumstances created by COVID-19, participants noted that the online format was an acceptable alternative.

Overall, the online format was well perceived. However, the general feeling was that an online format could not fully replace an in-person International Antarctic Conference. The move towards hybrid meetings (with online and in-person components) was seen as an important step for the future of conferences.

Based on our experience running a major online conference, we would like to make some final suggestions:

- Running an online conference is a lot of work; technical help and additional support is therefore important.
 - Internet connections can be unstable; having a contingency plan in case of dropouts or other fallouts is therefore useful.
 - An overview sheet listing a detailed running order, scheduled breaks, involved people and other information helps to keep track.
 - Training sessions with chairs, presenters and moderators give the chance to familiarize with the system, test out equipment and address any outstanding questions.
 - Spreading out the program across different time zones helps to make the conference inclusive.
 - Sitting in front of a screen can be exhausting. Breaks are important, both within a session (e.g., a 5-minute break after 60 minutes) and between the sessions.
 - Clear communication via selected channels is important.

Enjoy the experience!

This report was compiled by the 10 IAC 2021 Secretariat.

For further information, specific questions or to request document templates, please contact uac@uac.gov.ua