The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the International Meetings Industry
Survey Report

Research Group of CIMERT
International Meetings Industry Across the Globe
The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the International Meetings Industry Across the Globe

Contents

Foreword.......................................................... 3

I. Analysis of the current impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on the international meetings industry .......................................................... 5
   (I) Overall impact................................................. 5
   (II) Analysis of the overall impact of COVID-19 on the international meetings industry in the Asia-Pacific region .......................................................... 8
   (III) Analysis of the overall impact of COVID-19 on China’s international conference industry .......................................................... 12

II. Analysis of recent trends in the world’s international conference industry affected by COVID-19 epidemic .......................................................... 14
   (I) Trend of global outbreak .................................. 14
   (II) Overview of entry and exit restrictions across the world .......................................................... 15
   (III) Predication of the recent impact trends of the international conference industry in 2020 .......................................................... 20

III. Analysis of the medium- and long-term trends of the international conference industry during COVID-19 outbreak .......................................................... 22
   (I) The vitality of the international conference industry will be steadily restored. .................. 22
   (II) The service quality of the conference industry will be comprehensively improved. ............. 22
   (III) The formats of the conference industry will be extensively reformed. ............................... 23

IV. The developing path and countermeasures of the international conference industry after the epidemic .......................................................... 24
   (I) Establishing the concept of a community of shared future for mankind and overcoming difficulties through global cooperation. ......................................................... 24
   (II) All related parties should make collaborative response and bolster policy support. .................. 24
   (III) Formulating a national-level conference industry crisis warning and management mechanism. 24
   (IV) Reshaping the image of a safe destination and restoring the confidence in the international market. .......................................................... 25
   (V) Turning the crisis into an opportunity to comprehensively elevate the operation and service capabilities of enterprises .......................................................... 25
   (VI) Promoting digital industry-wide coverage and cultivating a new ecology for the international conference industry. .......................................................... 25
   (VII) Deeply integrating the conference industry into urban development and enhancing urban resilience .......................................................... 26

Foreword

Since its outbreak in early 2020, the novel coronavirus pneumonia has had widespread impact on the world’s trade contacts, economic development and social activities. To make things worse, the international meetings industry highly relying on accumulation of factors, transportation and personnel has suffered a crippling blow. Chengdu Municipal Bureau of Exposition advised CIMERT in February 2020 to study the impact of COVID-19 on the international meetings industry with the big data obtained from the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) and wield its think bank’s influence to support ICCA in guiding the work of the hard-hit international meetings industry. CIMERT established a special research group and tracked and monitored the dynamics of the international conferences across the world in the ICCA database, analyzed the changes of international conferences, predicated the situation in the short, medium and long terms, and made countermeasures and suggestions for the development of the meetings industry throughout the world.

Research Group of Center for International Meetings Research and Training Supported by ICCA (CIMERT)
(Data updated by April 6, 2020)
I. Analysis of the current impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on the international meetings industry

(I) Overall impact

1. The epidemic has a relatively large impact on the change of international meetings and spread to more countries and regions.

The possibility of making adjustment has increased in the world’s international meetings industry as WHO enhanced the impact of the novel coronavirus pneumonia outbreak to a very high level. The research group has analyzed the data gathered up to April 6 of 2020, ICCA regarding 1749 international meetings held from February to June 2020. The results suggest that the epidemic has a larger impact on the Asia-Pacific region compared to other parts of the world and 47.92% of the international meetings to be held in this region has been adjusted, followed by Africa where the proportion is 30.43%, while Europe and the United States are less affected (see Table 1). After the virus hit Europe, most of the European countries, Italy and Spain in particular, have put off or postponed the international meetings about to hold from March to April in Europe. A growing number of cities in other European countries, the Americas, the Middle East, and Africa have also appeared to be unable to organize an international conference as usual. If the global pandemic cannot be effectively controlled, the situation will be worsened in 2020, especially in North America and Europe where the number of international meetings is likely to drop sharply.

Table 1 Changes in the world’s international meetings industry in early 2020 under the influence of COVID-19 epidemic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of canceled meetings</th>
<th>Number of postponed meetings</th>
<th>Number of meeting places changed to other cities</th>
<th>Total planned sessions in early 2020</th>
<th>Total changed sessions in early 2020</th>
<th>Change ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia-Pacific region (including data from China)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>47.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>51.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1021</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>16.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The whole world</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1749</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>22.47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Adjustments include extension, cancellation, change of host cities, etc. The figure is accurate to the last two decimal places.

According to statistical data, a total of 74 epidemic-hit countries have canceled or extended international meetings or changed the host cities at present. The Asia-Pacific region and Europe constitute the overwhelming majority, accounting for 80.47%, 85.48%, and 82.35%; the North America follows behind by 14.06%, 3.63%, and 5.88%; it is least adjusted in Latin America (3.91%, 3.63%, 5.88%) and Africa (1.56%, 7.26%, and 5.88%). The affected countries are given in Fig. 1.
The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the International Meetings Industry Across the Globe

2. The changes mostly happened in the field of scientific research and technology services.

After detailed analysis of 393 international meetings in accordance with the Division of Industrial Sectors of National Economy, the latest version released by China, the research group has found that a large number of changes occurred in the field of scientific research and technology services, up to 173 times, accounting for 44.02% of the total number, followed by information transmission, software and IT services, education, culture, sports and entertainment, and rental and commercial services (see Fig. 2).

3. Medium and large conferences are greatly affected by the epidemic and small and large conferences are less affected.

By dividing 381 international conferences that have provided the expected number of participants into small, medium, large and super large meetings according to the scale of attendance, the researchers have found that the most affected are medium-sized conferences, having been adjusted by 193 times, accounting for 50.66% of the total; large conferences occupy the second place, by 78 times; small and super large conferences have been changed by 38 and 72 times respectively (see Fig. 3).

Note: A small meeting is attended by less than 100 people (excluding 100), a medium conference by 100-500 people (excluding 500 people); a large meeting by 500-1000 people (excluding 1000), and a super large meeting by more than 1000 people.
(II) Analysis of the overall impact of COVID-19 on the international meetings industry in the Asia-Pacific region

1. The epidemic has a serious impact on the holding of international meetings in the Asia-Pacific region, especially in China, South Korea, Singapore and Japan.

The researchers have tracked and analyzed 336 international conferences upcoming from February to June in the Asia-Pacific region and predicted that 58.45% of the participants (except for China) will be affected by the extension or cancellation of international meetings or change of host cities and 117 international conferences (not in China) will be affected, 46.80% of the total; the most affected countries include but are not limited to South Korea, Singapore, and Japan (see Fig. 4).

Fig. 4 Changes in the international convention and exhibition industry of the affected Asia-Pacific countries (except for China)

If China is counted, it is estimated that 56.72% of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region will put off or cancel international conferences or change the host cities; the sessions to be adjusted occupy 47.92%; and the affected number is 161 (See Fig. 5). (See Fig. 5)

Fig. 5 Changes in the international convention and exhibition industry of the Asia-Pacific countries (including China)

2. The changes are mainly concentrated in the field of scientific research and technology services, but rental and commercial services reveal the highest change ratio.

After subdividing 117 international conferences in the Asia-Pacific region (not including China) affected by the epidemic based on the latest Division of Industrial Sectors of National Economy published by China, the research group has found that a lot of changes occurred in the field of scientific research and technology services, as high as 59 times, accounting for 51.75% of the total expected international meetings to be held from February to June in the Asia-Pacific region (excluding China); the leasing and business service industry, the education, the information transmission, software and IT industry, and the culture, sports and entertainment industry came second; the following five sectors revealed a higher ratio in change: leasing and business services; culture, sports and entertainment; water conservancy, environment and public facility management; information transmission, software and IT services; and scientific research and technology services. (See Fig. 6)
After in-depth analysis of 161 international conferences in the Asia-Pacific region based on the latest Division of Industrial Sectors of National Economy published by China, the research group has found that a lot of changes occurred in the field of scientific research and technology services, as high as 80 times, accounting for 48.78% of the total expected international meetings to be held from February to June in the Asia-Pacific region; the leasing and business service industry, the education, the information transmission, software and IT industry, and the culture, sports and entertainment industry came second; five other sectors indicated a higher change ratio in the expected international meetings, i.e., non-metallic mineral products, finance, construction, leasing and business services, and water conservancy, environment and public facility management. (See Fig. 7)

3. Most of the changes happened in medium and large international conferences in the Asia-Pacific region and the change ratio was high.

The researchers have divided 161 international meetings in the Asia-Pacific region into small, medium, large, and super large by the size of estimated participants, wherein 77 medium-sized conferences were adjusted, which is the highest of all, followed by 37 large-sized conferences, 30 super large-sized conferences, and 10 small ones. This phenomenon coincides with the scale and classification of international conferences across the world. If it is categorized by the proportion of changed meetings in the total meetings of the same scale, the most affected are large meetings, accounting for 50.68%, followed by 48.43% of medium-sized ones.

![Fig. 8 Changes in international conferences in the Asia-Pacific region (Excluding China) by hierarchical classification](image)

![Fig. 9 Changes in international conferences in the Asia-Pacific region by hierarchical classification](image)

The rule of change by the size of participants in the international meetings held in the Asia-Pacific region will remain the same, regardless of whether or not China's data is added (see Fig. 8 and Fig. 9).
(III) Analysis of the overall impact of COVID-19 on China’s international conference industry

1. The epidemic has led to a rapid increase in the changes of international conferences held by China, and the impact is mainly concentrated in Taipei, Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai. According to statistics, 44 international meetings have been postponed or canceled and the host cities changed by China because of the pandemic, accounting for 51.16% of the total number held in China from February to June, and the size of affected international conference participants is 49.67%. Taipei, Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai are among the top three affected cities of international conferences. (See Fig. 10)

![Fig. 10 Changes in international conferences in the virus-hit cities of China](image)

2. The changes are mostly reflected in the scientific research and technology services, followed by the financial industry.

The research group has carefully analyzed the preceding 44 international conferences according to the lately-issued Division of Industrial Sectors of National Economy. The results tell that 21 of international conferences for scientific research and technology services are adjusted, occupying 42% of the total estimated number to be held in February to June. This coincides with the trend across the world and in the Asia-Pacific region; the international conferences involving finance, education, and leasing and business services come second; the change ratio in the following sectors are the highest: education; non-metallic mineral products; agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, and fishery; and water conservancy, environment and public facility management; information transmission, software and IT services. (See Fig. 11)

![Fig. 11 Impact of changes in international conferences on related industries in China](image)

3. The number and proportion of changes in China’s international conferences affected by the epidemic are mainly concentrated in medium-sized conferences and large-scale conferences.

The researchers have divided the 44 international meetings into small, medium, large, and super large levels by the size of estimated participants, wherein the medium-sized conferences were adjusted for 23 times, which is the highest of all, followed by 11 large conferences, 5 super large conferences and 3 small ones. This phenomenon accords with the changes of Asia-Pacific international meetings divided by level and scale. If it is categorized by the proportion of changed meetings in the total meetings of the same scale, the most affected are large meetings, accounting for 68.75%, followed by 53.49% of medium-sized ones.

![Fig. 12 Changes in international conferences in China divided by scale](image)
II. Analysis of recent trends in the world’s international conference industry affected by COVID-19 epidemic

(1) Trend of global outbreak

The latest data released by Johns Hopkins University show that as of 14 p.m. on April 5, 2020, EDT (14 p.m., April 5, Beijing time) a total of 1,203,923 cases were confirmed worldwide. The disease has been basically contained in China, but it is spreading in some countries and regions around the world. In reality, the situation differs greatly, and the growth rate in Europe and the U.S. is much higher than East Asian countries and regions. The 2nd COVID-19 multidisciplinary forum was held on March 29. There is not standard and it is not clear when the pandemic will end and the virus shows great uncertainty, the meeting noted. Europe and the United States have replaced China as the epicenters of the COVID-19 outbreak in succession, and at the same time, Latin America and Africa are experiencing the spread of the novel coronavirus.

At present, the virus is moving from east to west between 30 degrees and 50 degrees north latitude, and the climatic conditions are similar in the countries it passes from November to February. The areas where outbreaks may occur in a month or two are predicted with the climatic data in the same period of the year before, including Northeast Asia, Central Asia, Caucasus, East Europe, Central Europe, British Isles, northeastern and midwestern United States, and British Columbia. It is important to monitor the epidemic in New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Argentina and Chile from June to September.

Based on the predictions in multiple epidemiology papers and the regional distribution of ICCA meetings, the researchers have predicted the development of the COVID-19 epidemic in some typical regions and countries across the world:

(1) Asia-Pacific region: China has basically contained the spread of the epidemic, and it is gradually resuming the work and production while taking stringent measures to prevent imported cases. The transmission of the coronavirus is on the decline in South Korea is estimated to end by the early to middle May. The growth rate of COVID-19 cases in Japan has been controlled recently but there is still a tendency to spread. The government has not yet predicated on when it will completely disappear. As autumn and winter come in the southern hemisphere, the risk of epidemic spreading will be increased in Australia and New Zealand.

(2) Europe and the Middle East: United Kingdom will experience the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak in late May and early June, but it can be brought under control if contains, and British Columbia are implemented, for instance, closing schools, extorting citizens to stay home, and expanding social distancing. Once these measures are withdrawn however, the outbreak may reoccur in the second half of 2020 in the absence of vaccines. The time to completely stop the transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 in Italy and Iran depends on how rigorous the diagnosis policy is. The virus is estimated to disappear in early and middle June if the Italian and Iranian governments have adopted a stern diagnosis standard and there are few asymptomatic infections in the two countries, or it would not stop spreading until late July and early August.

(3) North America: The United States will see a turning point of mortality in middle April, and it is predicted to get rid of the plights in early June. Canada will suffer the outbreak by the end March and may continue to implement the current isolation and social distancing measures till August.

(4) Africa and Latin America: Most African countries have already experienced outbreaks. The Africa Center for Disease Control and Prevention predicts that COVID-19 may hit Africa on a large scale in the next stage. South America is still in the early stage of epidemic transmission. Brazil is the most affected country, and the disease is spreading fast in Argentina and Uruguay. The region will enter the outbreak period unless strict isolation and control actions are taken in time.

(II) Overview of entry and exit restrictions across the world

The entry and exit policies adjusted by the regional distribution of ICCA conferences and the major hosting parts and countries (regions) of international conferences are set forth below (see Table 2):

### Table 2 Summary of recent entry policies made by representative host countries (regions) of international conferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major regions</th>
<th>Major host countries (regions) of international conferences</th>
<th>Entry restriction measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>From March 28, 2020, the Chinese government temporarily stopped foreigners currently holding an effective visa and residence permit from entering China; Up to March 3, a total of 134 countries (regions) have restricted access to Chinese nationals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>From March 19, South Korea enforced control means for all inbound passengers; From March 22, all passengers from Europe must receive COVID-19 diagnostic tests; From March 27, all passengers from the United States must be quarantined for 14 days.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>By the end of March, Japan will expand its entry restrictions to citizens of the United States, China, South Korea, and most European countries and may also include the citizens of Southeast Asia and some African countries.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>From March 24, the Singapore government has banned foreigners with short-term visas from entering or transferring flights in Singapore. It only allows overseas personnel who have its work permit in medical service and transportation industry and their family members to apply for entry.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>On March 19, the local government stipulated that all inbound personnel who went to the countries/regions outside China (whether or not Hong Kong residents) 14 days ago must be subject to 14-day compulsory quarantine or under medical observation. The provision also covers those who traveled to Daegu and Gyeongsangbuk-do in South Korea, Iran, and Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy and Veneto in Italy, and Hong Kong locals who returned from Hubei Province 14 days before their arrival in Hong Kong.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>From March 13 to 15, the government suspended the visa-free policy for the holders of “overseas citizenship certificates”, except for diplomatic organs, governmental departments, international organizations, work and projects.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>The government ordered that, from the morning of March 26 to April 30, except for diplomats, international freight forwarders and licensed personnel, to prohibit all foreigners from entering Thailand either by air, sea, or land.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Major regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major host countries (regions) of international conferences</th>
<th>Entry restriction measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>APAC</strong>&lt;br&gt;Malaysia&lt;br&gt;From March 17, the government has restricted access to the following personnel:</td>
<td>The holders of the passports issued by Hubei Province, Zhejiang Province, or Jiangsu Province of the People’s Republic of China; All foreigners who have departed from or passed through the following provinces in the mainland of China: Hubei, Zhejiang, and Jiangsu; Foreigners who have visited the following areas in the past 14 days: Daegu City and Cheongdo County in South Korea; Lombardy, Veneto, and Emilia - Romania in Italy; Hokkaido in Japan; and Qom, Tehran, and Gilan Provinces in Iran.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia&lt;br&gt;From 21 p. m., March 20, the Australian government enforced a travel ban on all non-Australian citizens and non-permanent Australian residents and only allowed its citizens, permanent residents and their immediate family members to enter Australia.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand&lt;br&gt;At the midnight of March 19, New Zealand only allowed New Zealand citizens, permanent residents and their directive relatives to enter the country.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Europe</strong>&lt;br&gt;United Kingdom&lt;br&gt;From March 17, Italy restricted the “non-essential travel” of personnel from other parts of the world to EU countries for a period of 30 days. The Italian government declared a state of emergency. The China-Italy direct flights were canceled from January 30. The CAAC announced that all non-stop flights from Italy to the mainland of China would be closed up to April 29, 2020. From February 26, many countries launched restrictive measures against Italy, i. e., suspension of air or shipping services and entry prohibition.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy&lt;br&gt;From February 26, many countries launched restrictive measures against Italy, i. e., suspension of air or shipping services and entry prohibition.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain&lt;br&gt;From March 17, Spain announced to prohibit entry by land for a period of 30 days; From March 23, it expanded the entry restriction to land, sea and air borders for a period of 30 days.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany&lt;br&gt;From March 17, the government restricted the “non-essential travel” of personnel from other parts of the world to EU countries for a period of 30 days. From March 16, Austria, Switzerland, France, Luxembourg and Denmark implemented border controls on all inbound and outbound activities except for commuting purposes and freight transportation services.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France&lt;br&gt;From March 17, the government restricted the “non-essential travel” of personnel from other parts of the world to EU countries for a period of 30 days. From March 17, France closed the borders of EU and the Schengen Area for a period of 30 days to prevent non-EU citizens from entering.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland&lt;br&gt;From March 13, the government started to test and contain the persons entering from the border linking Switzerland with Italy and implemented the same measures at the areas where Switzerland adjoins Germany, France, and Austria. Swiss citizens and those with legal Swiss residence permits and cross-border work permits are allowed to enter Switzerland. Goods and transit passengers are allowed to pass through Switzerland. The Swiss government announces to close some small frontier stations. At 17 p. m., March 16, the Swiss government declared a state of emergency.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands&lt;br&gt;From 18 p. m., March 19, the Dutch government prohibited all non-essential personnel from third countries into European countries (including all EU countries, all the Schengen countries, and the United Kingdom). The policy in principle is valid for 30 days, and will be extended if necessary.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia&lt;br&gt;The Russian government announced to prohibit all foreign citizens and stateless persons from entering Russia from March 18 to May 1, excluding diplomats, staff members of airlines, sea transportation and inland navigation departments and agencies, and those with long-term residence permits.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden&lt;br&gt;From March 17, the government restricted the “non-essential travel” of personnel from other parts of the world to EU countries for a period of 30 days. Sweden temporarily closed its border for 30 days from March 30, only allowing Swedish citizens and those who had obtained residency permits and cross-border work permits are allowed to enter.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark&lt;br&gt;From March 17, the government restricted the “non-essential travel” of personnel from other parts of the world to EU countries for a period of 30 days. From March 13, Denmark announced to temporarily close the border and prohibited access except for its citizens, those with the right of residence, and foreign citizens for “other approved purposes”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U. S.&lt;br&gt;March 13, the U. S. government decreed that all non-U. S. citizens or residents who had traveled to the following places shall be banned from entering U. S.: the mainland of China, Iran, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and Ireland.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the International Meetings Industry Across the Globe

### Major regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major host countries (regions) of international conferences</th>
<th>Entry restriction measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canada</strong></td>
<td>From March 18, the Canadian government only allowed Canadian citizens and permanent residents to enter the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brazil</strong></td>
<td>The Brazilian government issued a 30-day provisional entry ban on tourists and visitors from China, the European Union, Iceland, Switzerland, Norway, Britain, Australia, Japan, Malaysia and South Korea from March 23. At the same time, it closed its borders with 9 neighboring countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Latin America</strong></td>
<td>The government of Argentina announced to shut off all borders for accessing Argentina by air, sea and land between 12 p.m., March 27 and March 31, 2020. Argentine citizens living abroad and foreigners with or without permanent residence permits for living in Argentina are banned from entering Argentina.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Argentina</strong></td>
<td>The government of Argentina announced to shut off all borders for accessing Argentina by air, sea and land between 12 p.m., March 27 and March 31, 2020. Argentine citizens living abroad and foreigners with or without permanent residence permits for living in Argentina are banned from entering Argentina.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle East and Africa</strong></td>
<td>Iran has been put on many countries’ no-entry list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Iran</strong></td>
<td>The Turkish government imposed a ban on entry to the citizens from Iran, Iraq, South Korea, China and Italy as well as those who had traveled to these countries 14 days ago from February 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Turkey</strong></td>
<td>The Egypt government enforced strict quarantine measures at all ports and borders; It issued an order to suspend all international flights within its territory from March 19 to 31.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Egypt</strong></td>
<td>South Africa declared a &quot;state of public calamity&quot; on the evening of March 15. The country suspended the issuance of visas to visitors from at-risk countries like China and Italy on the same day. From the next day, it shut 35 borders for entry by land and 2 seaports; The government issued a ban on entry to visitors and tourists from severely affected countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South Africa</strong></td>
<td>The British Technology Review of Imperial College London said that the outbreak would not be entirely contained until the vaccine was developed, and the most effective response might be a &quot;strict - loose&quot; circulation policy (see Fig. 13). It will affect the organization of international conferences in 2020 from the perspective of entry restrictions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above indicates that a majority of the world’s host countries of international conferences have taken rigorous actions to restrict entry from the mid to late March. The EU member states imposed 30-day tentative bans on entry; in Latin America, Brazil’s entry released a 30-day no-entry policy while Argentina’s restrictions on entry just last into the end of March; in the Asia-Pacific region, North America, the Middle East and Africa, a multitude of countries did not specify the date to lift the access restrictions. All these policies will directly affect the convening of international meetings in the first half of 2020.

The British Technology Review of Imperial College London said that the outbreak would not be entirely contained until the vaccine was developed, and the most effective response might be a "strict - loose" circulation policy (see Fig. 13). It will affect the organization of international conferences in 2020 from the perspective of entry restrictions.
(III) Predication of the recent impact trends of the international conference industry in 2020

As most countries have gradually implemented measures to restrict or control the entry of foreign residents, it will inevitably have a huge impact on the number of international conferences in a short period of time, leading to a cliff-like drop.

If the countries around the world collaborate with each other and adopt strict measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic, some areas (such as the Asia-Pacific region) will be able to stem the coronavirus by late April, and the border restrictions can be lifted and work resumed. Based on this, the change ratio in the number of international meetings worldwide to be held is estimated to be 23.9%. If the current epidemic areas (like Europe and North America) is gradually stabilized by middle or the end of May and the borders are unrestricted and work resumed, the change ratio in the number of international meetings to be held across the globe is estimated to reach 34.76% or 49.32%. If the epidemic in most of the world cannot be contained until the end of May or June, the entry restrictions will continue and the change ratio in the number of international meetings to be held all over the world is estimated to be as high as 68.10% or 86.11% or even higher (see Fig. 14 and Fig. 15).

Fig. 14 Estimated impact of different outbreak ending times on the number (venue) of international conferences held from February to June

Fig. 15 Estimated impact of different outbreak ending time to the change ratio (%) in international conferences held from February to June

In short, according to the development of regional outbreaks, the authoritative trend predication, and entry restriction policies, the impact on international conferences in the first half of 2020 will be further increased. At the same time, some organizers and sponsors of international conferences start to consider online conferences. If the regional outbreaks are effectively controlled to prevent a second peak worldwide and the bans on entry are withdrawn, it is estimated that the holding of international meetings will gradually return to normal in the second half of 2020. In Europe, North America, and Asian-Pacific region where a large number of host countries are located however, some experts predict that the pandemic will break out all over again this autumn and winter. With the reoccurrence of the coronavirus and the implementation of the “strict-loose” circulation policy, the world’s international meetings will be severely affected. According to the experience accumulated in online conferences and the rapid improvement of remote meeting software technology, a growing number of international meetings will transfer to online platforms in the foreseeable future and online meetings may become normal.
III. Analysis of the medium- and long-term trends of the international conference industry during COVID-19 outbreak

Being affected by the epidemic, the international conference industry will inevitably suffer a setback due to liquidity and aggregation. Although short-term disturbances and regional influences are unavoidable, they will not affect the overall development momentum of the international conference industry across the world. After the outbreak, the heavily affected countries and regions should take the impact of the outbreak seriously and be confident enough to meet challenges. Focus should be laid on the weaknesses of the international conference industry and the development trend during the outbreak should be grasped.

(I) The vitality of the international conference industry will be steadily restored.

1. Inevitability of revitalization. The nature of the new epidemic crisis is not an economic crisis, but a social and psychological crisis caused by a social public health crisis, and it is a temporary phenomenon in the process of sustained economic growth. In China, the epidemic has been gradually stemmed using effective isolation, prevention and control measures. Globally, the epidemic keeps spreading, yet the mortality rate of COVID-19 is not high for the moment. Looking back on the “SARS” period, the conference industry was one of the most directly affected sectors, and it is also an area of fast rebound and recovery. Therefore, as long as this novel coronavirus can be effectively and promptly controlled, fears will be gradually quelled and confidences rebuilt. The international conference industry will certainly show a restorative growing trend.

2. Potential of the conference industry to drive the economy. The conference industry has played an important role in stimulating and maintaining the economy by serving political diplomacy, stabilizing economic development, boosting market vitality, promoting cultural exchanges and industrial integration, and ensuring people's livelihood. It has become an essential industry. Within China, an increasing number of cities have been counted by the Union of International Associations, and the conference industry is gaining momentum. According to the latest ICCA data, China held 514 international conferences in 2019, rising to the 8th position in the global ranking, and has gradually established the image of conference power. Therefore, after the epidemic has stabilized, China will definitely focus on enhancing the confidence of international enterprises in its conference industry, deepen cooperation, and regard the conference industry as an important portal to restore trade and boost the economy. From a global perspective, the conference industry in the United States, Japan, Germany and other countries is mature with a solid economic foundation and experience in resisting market fluctuations and risks. Although the conference industry is under a lot of pressure during the downturn, once the market recovers, it can enter upon a new expansion phase in the short term and become an important means to bail out the economy.

(II) The formats of the conference industry will be extensively reformed.

1. New demands resulting in new conference themes. During the epidemic, the importance of online life, health care, epidemic prevention, social governance, and community linkage and cooperation between venues is perhaps an enterprise cooperation model sought after by large venues to relieve the stress of massive gathering, and ensure that conference activities are conducted in an orderly way.

2. Enterprise cooperation triggered by derivative problems. After the outbreak, quite a lot of activities and events will surely be conducted simultaneously because of postponement, which will challenge the capability of the conference venue. Therefore, deepening the linkage and cooperation between venues is perhaps an enterprise cooperation model sought after by large venues to relieve the stress of massive gathering, and ensure that conference activities are conducted in an orderly way.

2. New behaviors triggering new thinking about technology. Affected by the novel coronavirus outbreak, technology enterprises such as Google, IBM, and Facebook have worked on broadcasting large-scale galas online and online meetings have become the main mode during the epidemic. Having undergone the epidemic ordeal, people will rely heavily on network interactions for a period of time, and establish new behaviors and demand habits, which therefore drive the conference industry to make corresponding adjustment, provide a new way of thinking online conference businesses and conference technology, and further integrate online conference activities with offline conference activities.

1. New behaviors resulting in new conference themes. During the epidemic, the importance of online life, health care, epidemic prevention, social governance, and community linkage and cooperation between venues is perhaps an enterprise cooperation model sought after.

(III) The service quality of the conference industry will be comprehensively improved.

1. Reinforcement of risk awareness during outbreak. The impact of the new coronavirus pneumonia on the international conference industry is ultimately the impact of disease on the industry. To effectively respond to the impact, the prerequisite is to enhance the risk management awareness of conference service enterprises, adjust corresponding management mechanisms, and stress the handling of unexpected public health incidents. Conference venues in particular should follow and understand epidemic prevention related knowledge and introduce relevant institutions for monitoring, supervision and guidance. The responsible departments or personnel should regularly disinfect and clean the conference venues, maintain adequate air ventilation indoor, ensure that the supply of hand sanitizer, hand dryers, and paper towels are to be gradually included in normalized management to reduce the probability of recurrence.
IV. The developing path and countermeasures of the international conference industry after the epidemic

(I) Establishing the concept of a community of shared future for mankind and overcoming difficulties through global cooperation.

The spreading of the COVID-19 epidemic has made the world deeply understand the reality of the concept of a community of shared future for mankind. In the process of fighting the global public health crisis, the significance and importance of building a community of shared future for mankind have become more prominent. China has worked with the world to fight the epidemic, taken effective actions and decisive measures to slow down the transmission of the epidemic, and set an example for global cooperation. From the global analysis of COVID-19 implications on the international conference industry, as a specific field that relies on international connections and interdependence should establish the concept of a community of shared future for mankind. The countries and regions all over the world should share and exchange experience and practices with respect to policy support for conference industry, crisis management mechanism, restoration of international city images, operation of conference enterprises, digital technology for conferences, and integrated development of conferences and cities, to break through the barriers and prejudices, promote mutual assistance and collaboration on the basis of transcending national and regional boundaries, economic interest consideration and scientific and technological competition, and cultural values. The industry should sincerely cooperate with each other to overcome the difficulties together and create a bright future in the context of endless challenges and progressively increasing risks.

(II) All related parties should make collaborative response and bolster policy support.

The governments, associations, enterprises, research institutions, and other parties related to the conference industry should jointly conduct in-depth investigations, make accurate judgments, and take rapid actions to determine the policies and measures to fight the epidemic. To introduce conference projects, the governmental management department of the conference and exhibition industry should offer the sponsor and venue interim preferential policies, such as tax relief, special financial subsidies or postponed incentives. For the projects to be held locally, more preferential policies should be offered. For postponed meetings and activities, a fast and green channel should be opened with respect to the approval of associated procedures with the positive support from the public security, finance, industry and commerce departments after the convening date of the postponed meeting and activity is redetermined.

(III) Formulating a national-level conference industry crisis warning and management mechanism.

The governments should attach great importance to the management and control of the risks in the conference industry, mainly study the risk of interrupting large-scale international conferences because of public health emergencies, and encourage central cities to take the lead in introducing relevant warning and management mechanisms, and build an urban conference industry management and risk prevention system. We should take the risk identification, risk assessment, and risk response measures scientifically and design and perform the flowchart for the risk management mechanism of public health emergencies during major international conference activities to control the source of risk, lower the degree of risk, resolve the risk points, and improve the ability of the conference industry to respond to, manage, and recover. Qualified governments should set up special funds for risk compensation in the conference and exhibition industry to deal with the risks caused by natural disasters and public crisis events, use the laws and regulations for reference published by other industries and departments on risk management, and establish and improve risk management laws and regulations during conference activities. It is recommended that public health be included in the basic scope of conference activity approval or filing, so that risk management work can be carried out by law.

(IV) Reshaping the image of a safe destination and restoring the confidence in the international market.

The regions greatly affected by the epidemic should pay special attention to the promotion of conference industry images, maintenance of market order and coordination of meeting schedules. First, the state and relevant departments, especially the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Commerce, the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade and other official or semi-official organizations should positively carry out external publicity and report the latest situation of epidemic prevention and control; second, the relevant departments of the local conference management industry and industry associations should be energetically create conditions, communicate with relevant conference companies and sponsors, intensify the management of market order, and guide coordination of conference schedules; third, more attention should be paid to the management thinking of large destinations such as conferences, exhibitions, tourism, culture, and sports, wherein mobility and aggregation are the common lifeline of the above-mentioned industries, and the conference industry should work with related industries to carry out image reshaping and publicity.

(V) Turning the crisis into an opportunity to comprehensively elevate the operation and service capabilities of enterprises

First is to do what we can to resolve the survival crisis, fully study and accurately meet the market demands during the epidemic response period, and satisfy the expectations of all parties involving conference activities, effectively improve conference operation capabilities and service standards, and cope with higher-level security prevention and control situation after the virus is contained, comprehensively bolster the company's online operation capabilities, establish a stronger sense of risk management and cost efficiency, and scientifically build a crisis response mechanism, and receive market inspections with a higher level of corporate governance. Second is to turn the "empty window period" into an "incubation period", carefully make plans, accurately formulate corporate strategies, deeply think about the adjustment of business models, product models, and service models, and enhance the courage and ideas of change, and enhance the industry influence in the pattern of international conference industry. Third is to value personnel quality. During the epidemic response period, we should make full use of channels such as international conference sector news, exhibition industry organizations and professional online resources, vigorously strengthen training, improve the teamwork modes, and fundamentally enhance the professionalism and competitiveness of conference enterprises.

(VI) Promoting digital industry-wide coverage and cultivating a new ecology for the international conference industry.

The widespread impact of the epidemic on field meetings will further boost the new formats such as smart meetings, online meetings, and meeting digitization. All parties in the conference industry should positively change their way of thinking, embrace and practice cutting-edge information technology in the industry's macro propulsion and micro operations. First is to highlight conference-related digital infrastructure, vigorously support and promote the construction of smart conference venues and facilities, and accelerate the integrated development of industries and conference industries like 5G, AI, and VR. Second is to quicken the reengineering of the Internet process for the operation mechanism of the conference industry, and use big data to develop platform management and operation to realize the data-oriented, platform-based, intelligent upgrading and normalization of the conference industry. Third is to encourage conference companies and technical service providers to collaborate, comprehensively upgrade the platform service
system, and help conference events quickly build their own media platform to realize the digital layout of streaming media and promote the "online + offline global traffic" interest-benefit transformation. Fourth is to further urge the conference companies and related organizations to complete the digital transformation of business models and organizational operating models. The enterprise development model should change from competitive to symbiotic. In the face of various uncertainties including public health events, the enterprises should collaborate with internal and external industry partners to innovate the value space.

(VII) Deeply integrating the conference industry into urban development and enhancing urban resilience

One is to further examine and rediscover the multiple functions of city conference and exhibition venues. For instance, broadening the knowledge horizon a functional architecture of "event management" in conference management, digging out the functions of meetings and exhibition venues as city emergency management resettlement sites, and emphasizing the plural values of the convention industry in urban development and social governance. Second is to introduce, plan and update international conference projects and brands in combination with urban advantageous industries, reinforce horizontal exchanges and cooperation with international and domestic cities, and use international conference brands to help recover the images of cities and regions affected by the epidemic. Third is to fully play the role of the conference industry as an industrial platform and a binder of modern market economy, solidly penetrate into urban and regional industries and markets, especially in subdivided industries and sub-sectors, dig new conference themes, innovate new conference consumption scenarios, and link upstream and downstream industrial resources and consumer demands, so as to boost international and urban trade activities and achieve economic recovery.