

**WORLD ZOROASTRIAN CONGRESS  
GUIDELINES  
AND  
SELECTION PROCESS  
FOR HOST/VENUE**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

When Zarathushtis migrated from Iran to India centuries ago (8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries) they found a fertile place to live and worship in freedom, and came to be known as the ‘Parsis’. *This was the first diaspora.*

In the 1900s, with the liberalization afforded by Reza Shah Pahlavi, another wave arrived and settled in Western India, generally known in India as the ‘Iranis’. Attempts by the Parsis of India to dialogue with Zarathushtis in the mother country of Iran in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, have been recorded in the *Rivayats*.

Since the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Zarathushtis from the mother country of Iran (especially since the revolution in Iran in 1979), as well as from the diaspora on the Indian subcontinent, have settled in other parts of the globe notably the U. S. A., UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Middle East, Europe, Far East and other places, which may generally be termed as the ‘**Western Diaspora**’. So today, residing in the Diaspora, we have Parsees and Iranis from India and Iranians from Iran all living and working together, identifying themselves as Zoroastrians. (request raised by RR on 26.6.2003)

As early as in the 1960s a need was felt to bring together Zarathushtis who had spread all over the globe to dialogue and discourse. Iran took the lead in holding the first World Zoroastrian Congress, in Tehran, in 1960 and then again in 1996. Subsequent congresses have been held in Bombay (1964; 1974; 1978; 1990, 2013); Houston (2000); London (2005); Dubai (2009); Perth (2018) and New York (2022)

An international congress of Zoroastrians shall be held every 4 to 5 years at a time and a place to be designated by the GWG peers/GCZT to be announced at the preceding congress.

The entity awarded the organization of the congress shall establish a “Congress Committee” that shall work closely with the GWG peers/GCZT to organize the congress.

Note: The terms GWG and GCZT are interchangeable, GWG being an arm of the GCZT.

GCZT has a core committee that has been instrumental in the preparation of these guidelines and may respond to issues arising. The core committee in the future may delegate this responsibility to others.

## II FOREWORD

This document is intended as a guide for any Zoroastrian Regional Organization willing to bid and host a global Zoroastrian congress. The document is the property of the Global Working Group (GWG)/GCZT and may not be amended or distributed to anyone without the permission of the GWG/GCZT. The bidding process shall begin and end on a date certain. Only those bids received within this time period shall be entertained.

The Congress, held every 4/5 years, is the single most significant event of the worldwide Zoroastrian community without borders that offers opportunities for discussion of issues facing the worldwide community, networking and learning. It is a place for gathering, renew friendships, update information, share resources and learn from each other. It is also an opportunity for the local community members managing the congress to promote entrepreneurial skills and build capacity for event management.

It is the intent of the GWG to offer the congress to the winning bidder/entity at the congress, prior to the next congress, announcing the winning bidder/entity at the closing ceremony to manage the next congress with the passing of the rotating congress trophy to be held by the winning bidder/entity for 4 years until the next congress. It is essential that the head of the entity assigned to organize the next congress receive the trophy in person, ensuring its safekeeping.

Circumstance arising when there is no bidder or no suitable bid, the GWG peers/GCZT shall make the decision, at least 6 months prior to the congress at which the next congress is to be announced, to assign the management of the next congress to an entity of their choosing.

The arrangements made and the management of the congress shall adhere to these guidelines and are subject to approval by the GWG peers/GCZT assigned to oversee the congress.

The congress organizers shall have full responsibility for the planning of all aspects of the congress in collaboration with the GWG peers/GCZT who shall be assisting. In other words the congress shall be a collaborative effort between the organizers and the GWG peers/GCZT.

Selection of month and dates for the congress shall be in consultation with GWG peers/GCZT and shall be such that it is not in conflict with other global and or regional events taking place within our worldwide community

### III REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS FOR A BIDDER

The bidder shall be an organization registered as a charitable/not for profit organization in the country/state of its residence (regions where such registration is not permitted are excepted) serving the interest of Zoroastrians in a Region identified as participating Regions by the GWG/GCZT.

### IV. VISION AND MISSION

The Vision and Mission for our worldwide Zarathushti community, and consequently for the World Zoroastrian Congress, as developed at the “*Coming Together Roundtable*” at the World Congress in London, 2005, and subsequent meetings held by Global Working Group (GWG) members are:

**VISION:** To nurture a caring, compassionate, harmonious, altruistic, observant, esteemed and prosperous community, with respect for diversity in belief and practice and move the creation forward to a blissful state that we call *Frašō.Kərati*.

**MISSION:** To come together and work together in *Hamazori* for the Zarathushti and global communities, celebrating its diversity.

This can be facilitated by bringing members of our worldwide community together at a Congress every four or five years for discourse and dialogue and possible action, on issues of common benefit that promote solidarity, welfare, progress and usher prosperity for the community.

Dialogue and discourse conducted with civility opens our minds, and creates Understanding, out of which emerge Convergence, Consensus and Direction. Consensual actions, resulting from a proper understanding of the issues, are sustainable and beneficial especially those relating to culture, heritage, health, entrepreneurship, women, youth and communication.

Congresses are a fertile ground for sowing the seeds for subsequent action worldwide, remembering that “Dialogue brings minds together and Action brings hearts together”, thereby paving the way for future progress.

## V. CONGRESS GUIDELINES

The Congress must promote harmony and respect for each other throughout our worldwide community. Diversity of thought is an attribute that promotes richness.

No sectarian or partisan interest may prevail.

A fitting theme appropriate for the period and the prevalent worldwide thought shall be selected around which the Congress shall be structured.

### ***PROGRAMMING***

Through the proceedings of the Congress subject matter relevant to all of the guiding institutions; religion and history, education and scholarship, sciences and arts, governance and organization, business and professions, and others, shall be adequately featured.

Opportunities for interest groups to meet and deliberate shall be made available.

Events that promote mingling with each other in appropriate age groups shall be plentiful, e.g. youth, seniors, singles, etc.

Specific networking opportunities for businesses, academicians, educationists, women’s and other interest groups shall be provided.

Space for vendors, distribution of material and display of books and products shall be made available.

Our worldwide Zarathushti community is blessed with many regional and local organizations that serve the interests of communities in specific geographic areas. Opportunities need to be provided to these organizations for dialogue and to address global issues and challenges. The Congress shall provide this opportunity in its programming.

The welcome at the opening ceremony shall include a welcome by the host committee congress chair followed by the GWG/GCZT chair.

Following the preliminaries of the opening ceremony the congress sessions shall begin with a 90 minutes plenary assigned to GWG/GCZT highlighting the work of the GWG/GCZT and its Regions.

The other three mandatory plenaries 90 minutes duration each that shall be embedded in the congress program shall be assigned to:

- WZCC Global for the promotion of the welfare and prosperity of our worldwide community
- Apex Mobed Regional Organizations for the spiritual wellbeing of our worldwide community and Mobeds religious/spiritual leadership.
- The World Zarathushti Community Awards ceremony to be coordinated by the GWG/GCZT awards committee consisting of 4 individuals. This may be a lunch or dinner event, courtesy of the congress and may be longer than 90 minutes if desired. Appendix "E" provides the methodology for seeking nominations and lays out the rules governing the awards which may be amended by the committee to cater for newer awards. The awards ceremony may be hosted by an experienced compere.

Besides the plenaries relative to WZCC Global and Mobeds religious/spiritual leadership the program may include other elements on these two very important topics for our community. The glue that holds our worldwide community together is the Zarathushti faith sustained and nurtured by our mobeds. Hence a significant portion of the congress shall be devoted to addressing issues faced by our mobeds, their empowerment, development and financial support

Programs relative to:

- Youth including Return to Roots, ZYNG, XYZ, ZYNA and other notable programs run by youth in various Regions
- Women's issues
- Promotion of scholarship

shall be embedded in the overall program.

No topics of controversial nature shall be included. Calls/appeals from unknown/new organizations /bodies/individuals located in different parts of the world, expressing desire to either join the congress or asking for allocation of speaking slots may be provided after careful scrutiny ensuring no disruption, prejudicial to Zoroastrianism or offend the sentiments of our community.

Attention shall be given to the initiation of *legacy projects* for the benefit of our worldwide Zarathushti community to be further developed and grown upon the conclusion of the Congress. The Congress organizers may encourage the incubation of such a project in the preceding months leading up to the Congress at which time it may be introduced and inaugurated with an appropriate program element. Examples of such projects are the initiation of the **World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (WZCC)** and the Zoroastrian Women International Network (**ZWIN**) at the Houston Congress. The Coming Together Roundtable, the Society of Scholars of Zoroastrianism (**SSZ**) at the London Congress and the Global Working Group (GWG) at the Dubai Congress are other examples.

Congresses are primarily for discussion of issues facing our worldwide community and sharing of information. Academics and scholarly presentations shall be limited if any for which several conferences are held regularly all over the globe.

Continuity and succession are inherent. Next generation leadership is essential for a community to sustain itself. Every opportunity shall be provided by the organizers to involve the next generation in the planning and execution with the older more experienced leaders advising. Several program elements at the congress shall be geared to the development of next generation leadership.

### ***PROCEEDINGS***

Proceedings of the Congress shall be published by the host organization within 6 months, or at most, one year after the Congress to the Global Working Group/GCZT.

Additionally, the host country shall submit a final Statement of Accounts – actual versus budgeted, highlights of the Congress and goals achieved. This will enable better planning by the Global Working Group members/GCZT in future. (See ‘Appendix-C’)

A self-regulated process of session chairs submitting their reports online, with essential images, shall be adhered to, lessening the burden on the host organization to make the compilation.

The proceedings of all sessions and events of the congress shall be video recorded and uploaded to a public sharing platform like YouTube for access to all.

### ***FINANCING***

Financing the Congress shall be the responsibility of the entity/group proposing to host the Congress

The host Region shall provide an undertaking that potential loss, if any, arising out of the Congress shall be borne by them.

Generally, Congresses in most part are financed from the registration fees paid by the participants and donations from supporters.

Regions that comprise GWG/GCZT are encouraged to provide support to the host region by providing advertisements in the Congress souvenir, sponsoring youth from their Region and any other means available to the Region.

Creative ways of financing Congresses have been adopted in the past:

- Registration generally covers only the main program, most meals and entertainment.
- A potpourri of events is offered some included in the registration fee, others at additional cost
- Tourism Board is approached to explore possibilities of Business and Entertainment Tourism to reduce cost.
- Supporters are solicited for specific events, and for advertising in the Congress Program Brochure.
- Donors are solicited for general expenses.
- Raffles, and other fundraisers are offered.

- offer exhibit space to large corporations in the Region
- offer space to vendors to sell their ware.

The organizers of the congress are expected to return 20% of their profits to the next host and as such that sum keeps rolling for the benefit of all future hosts.

### ***VENUE, BOARDING, LODGING AND TRAVEL***

The selection of the venue is critical. It should preferably be close to places of interest and tourism. Preference shall be given to those proposals providing for the orchestration of all of the congress events and boarding and lodging of all registrants in a single complex without the need for commute between several venues.

***Boarding and lodging*** provided shall be reasonable and affordable by registrants from around the world. 3 to 4 star hotels in the immediate vicinity of the conference center could also be considered to house the participants.

Alternately home stays may be offered and organized.

***Meeting Rooms:*** The venue should offer main hall/lecture rooms, meeting rooms/poster rooms. Communal space for community to mingle and hold impromptu conversations.

***Gastronomy*** is an important factor for the success of any conference. Wholesome healthy meals reasonably priced ought to be made available at the venue or at a short walking distance. If possible, members of the local community may be encouraged to provide home cooked meals at reasonable costs.

***Travel:*** The congress organizers may identify travel agencies (preferably Zoroastrian) in various Regions that can create packages for attendees. This information should be published well in advance so that attendees can avail of visa applications, airline tickets, hotel bookings and excursion packages in a single one-stop transaction.

## **VI. PROCEDURE FOR INVITING PROPOSALS (RFP)**

To the extent that the Vision and Mission of the congress are fulfilled, successive Congresses need to be held in the future. Heretofore entities and locations have been chosen by a rather limited process, to hold the World Zoroastrian Congresses. In order to establish a process with global involvement, a procedure has been developed. What follows is a Procedure for inviting Proposals (RFP) for holding the World Zoroastrian Congress, a Guide for the preparation of such Proposals, and their evaluation.



1) A “*Request for Proposal*” (*RFP*) from participating Regions identified by GWG/GCZT shall be invited by the Selection Committee of Global Working Group/GCZT at least 2 years in advance of the upcoming Congress.

Bids shall be received by Global Working Group peers, steering committee as the case may be at [gwgadmin@gmail.com](mailto:gwgadmin@gmail.com)

Time shall be allocated to all regions to present and discuss their bids in the presence of GWG/GCZT members.

2) *Selection Committee*: Five prominent Zarathushtis from the Global Working Group/GCZT, familiar with the process of hosting large international meetings shall be selected to evaluate the Proposals, and make recommendations. No member of the Selection Committee can belong to any organization proposing to host the Congress.

3) *Results* of the evaluation shall be declared after each country makes their own presentation; if possible one year in advance of the previous Congress.

## VII. GUIDE FOR SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL

The orchestration of a Congress is an art, a creative process and as such, the filing and submission of a proposal should be done on a prescribed format available in ‘*Appendix-A.*’ Those organizations submitting their proposals are encouraged to employ their collective ingenuity and creativity in developing a proposal.

### *PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM*

Establish an appropriate group and process for preparing the Proposal.

Prior to preparing the proposal the region interested in bidding for the Congress should obtain consensus in writing from the Head/s of the Zoroastrian organization/s that exist in that specific region. Regions where Organizations are not permitted or where there is no formal organization are naturally exempted. Nevertheless, an event such as a gahambar be organized to facilitate the local community members to mingle with the visitors.

Please note that your approach for preparing the Proposal is as important as its content for its evaluation. Members of a local Proposal Development Team may include:

- Members of the local governing committee
- Local priests
- Youth
- Respected and notable Zarathushtis of the region.
- Business persons and/or WZCC members

- Local experts in organizing conferences
- Academicians
- Members of all sections of the community

### ***THE PROPOSAL***

The Proposal shall include the following:

1. **Aspiration/Motivation:** What is your organization's/Region's motivation to hold the congress and how will the congress further your organization?Region's goals and that of GWG/GCZT. Also substantiate the desirability for your organization/Region to hold the congress; points of historical and/or geographical interests could be of relevance, cultural and religious diversity of the Region may be another or it may simply be the uniqueness of your community.
2. **Vision and Mission:** How will the congress achieve its vision) and mission?
3. **Theme:** The theme shall be innovative, powerful, meaningful and relevant to the time
4. **Goals and Objectives:** As an aid to creativity, consequent to the congress, how do the organizers visualize some betterment, some uplifting of the worldwide community?
5. **Venue:** Adequate physical space in which the congress is held is essential to the success of the congress. Typically, 500 to as many as 2000 participants have attended previous congresses. A large enough space to seat all participants for plenary sessions and gala banquets is a requisite along with several rooms for concurrent sessions plus space for exhibition of cultural items, products and services should be made available. Proximity to an international airport should be a consideration as well as shuttles from the airport to the venue. WiFi service, green room for speakers to prepare and spaces for performers to practice should be given consideration as well as a business center offering printing, faxing and reproduction facilities ought to be made available.
6. **Duration of the Congress:** Ideally three full days of programs and activities with sightseeing opportunities possibly later in the afternoons during the days of the congress and also either preceding the congress or following the congress may be considered
7. **Participation:** The Congress shall be attended by non-Zoroastrian Spouses and kept open to other non-Zoroastrians by invitation, example, speakers, VIP Guests and shall include

leading Zoroastrians from all regions, top local government officials and prominent speakers. Efforts shall be made to build the image of Zoroastrian community in the Region where the Congress is being held and attempts shall be made to highlight the business and professional opportunities the Region offers to the delegates

8. **Program details:** A program outline shall aid in the evaluation of the proposal. Program shall be respectful of all divergent view points; should not appear to be lop sided. The congress is to be a big tent reflecting all views. Program needs to create space for exchange of ideas between diverse religious/cultural views. The program shall be structured in a way that is beneficial to the community, will provide entertainment and include all the elements identified in section V under “Programing” allowing for satellite meetings for all interests.
9. **Communications:** How will the congress committee maintain effective communication with presenters, participants and GWG peers/GCZT. Availability of WiFi and zoom In additionat the proposed site and to participants without cost is necessary. Website for the congress should be developed and updated regularly? Capacity to handle large volumes of emails, online/offline payments, travel logistics shall be demonstrated.
10. **Delegate Fees:** Reasonable rates for congress registration inclusive of all main meals attracts participants. However low rates are not viable commensurate with expenses hence reliance on grants and subsidies comes into play. Fiscal soundness must be proven. Detail fee structure shall be communicated to Zoroastrians worldwide through the congress website and payment shall be accepted via secured payment gateway available through the website.
11. **City Tours:** For a good number of participants attendance at the congress is an adjunct to their plans to tour the Region. Organizers may plan local site-seeing tours some complimentary others at a cost and also identify travel agents who may arrange participants itinerary for pre- and post-congress travel. Ideally the City Tourism Board, shall be contacted to explore business and entertainment tours for delegates to reduce cost.
12. **Travel:** Travel plans to and from the congress shall be the responsibility of the participants. However, congress organizers may assist in identifying travel agents.
13. **Accommodation: In addition to availability of accommodation at the main venue of the congress,** preferential rates with 3 to 4 star hotel accommodation shall be negotiated that is affordable to all. Availability of good, clean reasonably priced accommodation in the venue chosen or in close proximity to the venue with complimentary transportation to the venue is another important consideration. Affordability is often a prime consideration for participants. Group rates should be secured by the organizers for all participants.

14. **Outside Catering:** Contracts shall be entered into with reputed 5\* Catering Cos. only to safeguard health of delegates. Plans for catering of all meals complimentary or at cost shall be identified.
15. **Financing:** Identify fund raising avenues and methods and possible grants to supplement income from registration fees in order to meet expenses.
16. **Budget:** Please see ‘Appendix-B’ and complete all items on the form
17. **Remarks:** Include a narrative of how the Proposal has been prepared identifying the Proposal Development Team for ease of evaluation.
18. **Congress Committee:** Identify members that will form the congress organizing committee, their experience in organizing events and their capacity for undertaking logistics, fund raising and program setting. Their credentials will be helpful. In other words, the GWG peers/GCZT need to establish the relative strength of the organization to hold the congress which is several magnitudes larger than local events.
19. **Contact Person:** Identify the congress committee chair or 2 co-chairs for larger organizations along with the Regional chair who shall regularly communicate and update the GWG/GCZT on all aspects of the planning of the Congress.
20. **Local Governmental Support:** Identify local first responder capacity to respond to emergencies and local government support in terms of police protection, funding, transportation, etc.

### ***PROPOSAL DEADLINE***

The completed Proposal with supporting documents shall be submitted to the GWG peers/GCZT, steering committee as the case may be, at [gwgadmin@gmail.com](mailto:gwgadmin@gmail.com) at least one year prior to the next Congress.

The Proposal shall be evaluated by the Selection Committee of Global Working Group/GCZT. Announcement of the next host country shall possibly be made a year in advance. The Congress Torch instituted by Dubai will be jointly presented by Dubai and the Organizers of the previous Congress to the next Host Region on the concluding day of the previous Congress.

## **VIII. EVALUATION CRITERIA**

The Global Working Group/GCZT Selection Committee will evaluate Proposal using the following evaluation criteria.

- Does the Proposal fulfill the Vision and Mission, and the requirements spelled out for the World Congress;
- Economic viability and affordability to participants;
- Capacity of the venue and that of the community to undertake the Congress and all the logistics thereof;
- Distinctive character of the congress and whether programs are innovative and relevant to the time;
- Ability to inspire and seek cooperation of all sections of the community in *Hamazori*;
- Process by which the proposal was developed. Outsourcing of congress to third parties or Event Management companies is not advisable and shall be avoided as any fees charged by them puts an extra burden on the cost of conducting the Congress;
- Support from neighboring Zarathushti organizations in that region;
- Legacy projects;
- Accommodation and Transport arrangements;
- Attractiveness for Sightseeing and Tourism;
- Stage events, community awards and cultural programs;
- Arrangements for webcast and electronic archiving;
- Funding strength of the Proposal.

## IX. GUIDELINE PREPARATION PARTICIPANTS

This document has been inspired by items arising at the “Coming Together Roundtables” 2005 – 2007 and subsequent meetings held by the Global Working Group. It has been enabled with the participation and support of the following persons and Regions comprising GWG/GCZT:

### **Persons:**

Rohinton Rivetna (North America), Behram Pastakia (North America), Firdosh Mehta (North America), Rustom Kevala (North America), Minoo Shroff (India), Dinshaw Mehta– Chairman, FPZAI (India), Yazdi Tantra – (India), Meher Bhesania (UAE), Dorab Mistry (UK), Paurushasp Jila (UK), Mehraban Firouzgary or delegate (Iran), Sam Kerr (Australia), Tehmus Mistry (New Zealand), Neville Shroff (Hong Kong)

### **Regions:**

Zoroastrian Anjumans of Iran, Federation of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, Bombay Parsi Panchayat, Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America, Zoroastrian trust Funds of Europe, Zoroastrians of Middle east, The Incorporated Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton and Macao, Singapore Zoroastrian Association, Federation of Australian Zoroastrian Association and Zoroastrians of Pakistan.

## APPENDICES –

APPENDIX A: Form for Submission of Proposal for Hosting the Congress

APPENDIX B: Form for preparation of Budget for the Congress

APPENDIX C: Form for submission of Report to GWG after the Congress

APPENDIX D: Report of Previous Congresses (*Report of Sam Balsara at Dubai and Mumbai Congresses and the Coffee Table Book compiled and published by the 9<sup>th</sup> World Congress Organizers, Dubai. Report and book shall be made available on request.*)

APPENDIX E: Guide for World Zoroastrian Community Awards