

**MINUTES OF THE SEGH BOARD MEETING HELD ON 20<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2023 AT 1pm  
(WAT) ON ZOOM**

Agenda:

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the last meeting
3. Matters arising from the last Minutes
4. Report on Greece 2023 Conference
5. Report on Membership and Finance
6. Website updates
7. Report on Fellows' Matters
8. Report from EGAH
9. Report on ECR Matters
10. Other Business
  - i) Presentation of SEGH “Nigeria 2024” Conference bid
  - ii) Vote on Board Membership proposal for Jayanta Biswas (India)
11. Adjournment and Closing

Attendance:

- |                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. A Olatunji      | 11. F Ajayi          |
| 2. B Kaninga       | 12. F Onyangore      |
| 3. O Osano         | 13. C Prater         |
| 4. O Morton-Bermea | 14. M Barbieri       |
| 5. S Potgieter     | 15. M Hashmi         |
| 6. O Humphrey      | 16. A Hursthouse     |
| 7. D Purchase      | 17. J Olajide-Kayode |
| 8. A Argyraki      |                      |
| 9. M Watts         |                      |
| 10. T Laniyan      |                      |

AO welcomed all to the meeting and gave a run down of the Agenda for the day.

1. Apologies were received from:

1. Sanja Potgieter
2. Martin Gabersek
3. Gillian Gibson

2. The minutes of the last meeting was summarised by AO and it was adopted as the correct record of proceedings at the last meeting.

3. The main matter that arose from the minutes that was addressed was that of the Greece 2023 Conference. AA reported that the Society was comfortable with finances for the Conference i.e. from sponsorship, Conference registration, new memberships, etc. She added that it is expected that some money will be remitted to the Society.

Other matters that arose were taken as substantive Agenda items.

4. On the progress made on preparations for Greece 2023 conference, AA reported that sponsorship had been received to the tune of Euro 12,600. She added that the Conference programme was being finalized, with last minute rescheduling being done. AA informed all about a discussion with MW to have a Special Issue for the Conference. She stated that messages will be sent to all presenting authors/delegates to signify their interest in publishing in the Special Issue.

MW commended the efforts of AA and her team on setting up the Conference. AA also recognized the work being done by Alecos Demetriades on the workshops sponsored by the IUGS. AO sought clarification about the rates for joining the Conference online, AA responded that the procedure for Registering for and joining the Conference online has been put on the website. She added that some registrants had already paid for that option.

5. JO reported that new members had been added to the Society as a result of Conference registrations, with majority of them being ECRs. AA had provided a list of the ECRs which made integrating them into the database easier. A draft design of the Membership Certificate was presented. The certificate was accepted by Board members subject to minor modifications to the wordings. AA asked if membership numbers will be given as well. She suggested that this would make identifying members in the database easier as there might not be need to use only names. AO said this might be tricky as membership numbers usually reflect hierarchy/duration of membership. In his contribution, KT added that membership information collected at the due renewal stage is mainly personal details and not details about the members' record in the Society. He suggested that if membership numbers were issued, a background application could be included on the website that could capture the numbers as members renewed their dues. Responding, OH stated that the in-built GoDaddy functions were being used to collect member data during payment, and this only requests for name and credit/debit card details. He said if the Stripe software were to be used however, more functionalities would be available to be used including automatic due renewal. This would however mean changing the way payments are received, but the poorly-formulated membership list on GoDaddy would be improved. To MW's question about Stripe being able to send automatic due renewal reminders, OH said it can. OH also suggested a review of the membership cadres offered by the Society. He canvassed for a reduction of the 7 levels/types of membership to make the due payment process with Stripe much easier. AO responded that there was an attempt to streamline the membership dues at the Eldoret Conference to no avail, as not many Board Members were around at the Conference. He hoped that it would be possible at the Athens Conference.

On Finance, KT reported that there had been a steady inflow from membership fees. The Society had GBP6,314.26 in her bank account as at the time of reporting.

### **Actions:**

**1. JO to modify the Membership Certificate design (Status: Done)**

**2. Discussion between AO, MW, AA, OH, KT and JO at the Athens Conference to see how the membership database can be migrated to Swipe, how membership numbers can be assigned and how the membership numbers can be captured along with other data at due renewal stage.**

**3. Discussion on streamlining the membership levels/dues to be held in Athens.**

6. OH reported the need to update the Google analytics for the website, which he had done and was waiting for a total synchronization of the website data. He however presented data on engagement with the website for April to June, 2023. In that period, there were 207 users (with 156 of them being new), 582 sessions (2.81 sessions per user), an average session time of 2.1 minutes and 2,525 page views. Visits to the website by Country was led by Greece, followed by UK, Nigeria, Brazil, China and India. United States and Mexico also made the top 10 list, which OH attributed to the recent *SEGH Americas Live Event*. The landing page and the Greece Conference pages were the most visited, and there was a surge in the visit to the “Join SEGH page”. There was however a slight drop in average duration of use for the website, which OH attributed to no new materials uploaded on the website for a while. He expressed hope that new blogs from the Greece Conference will drive more traffic to the website.

MW suggested getting more blogs from the Conference apart from the Prize Giving, in order to have materials queued up for posting for several months. OH agreed that this will be a good way to get content for the website. The need for Board members to each write a blog was reiterated by AO. He suggested CP write a blog to highlight the traction that the Americas had gained in terms of events and membership.

MH offered to help with the social media handle(s) of the Society.

### **Actions:**

**1. Members to improve on publicity of all SEGH activities, and write blogs for the website.**

**2. MH to work with OH and JO on improving publicity for the Society’s activities.**

7. AH stated that the Fellows’ Meeting and Seminars during the Greece conference were worth looking forward to, and more discussions will be held by the fellows on how to help SEGH move forward.

8. MW reported that the rejection rate had moved up to ca. 65%, as there were still many submissions that lacked basic paper-writing structure/skill. There was a slight drop in the backlog of papers being handled by the Associate Editors but there was a rise in decisions compared to submissions; which is a good turn around. About 13 Handling Editors had been brought on board in the last 6 months, which has helped improve the efficiency rate. MW however, reported a shortage in specialists from Public Health, Epidemiology, Geospatial Modelling/AI, etc. He stated that the journal needed specialists from those disciplines on board. Some of the papers in the backlog that were yet to be cleared were assigned to Ming Wong for

the final approval, and that was detected quite late. This delayed the publication of the papers even though the final decisions were ready. This has however been sorted with Springer. There were also some papers whose authors had not returned the revisions requested. Some revisions had been pending for many months and EGAH has asked Springer to request for the revisions in 14 days.

The turn-around time for acceptance of papers was 125 days in 2022, it was improved to 53-60 days in Q1 of 2023 but is now at ca. 80 days. This was attributed to the batch of papers that had issues of final decision and those who had not returned their revisions. It is hoped that soon enough, a few more papers will be cleared off the backlog. The journal now has 650 submissions for 2023.

As at the last meeting, there were 200 papers which hadn't gone into a Special Issue. For the EGAH @ 50 SI which was completed in 2021, 80 papers were released in May, 2023. It is hoped that by September 2023, all the papers would have been published. On SIs, MW reiterated that the success of the Issues should be the quality of papers in it, and not the quantity of papers. This had remained the problem with many SIs in the past. Editors of future SIs were advised to direct prospective authors to the many resources on writing on the SEG and EGAH websites.

A few problems still persisted with the SNAPP system, but a Handling Editors' meeting had been slated for the following week; where more resolutions to the issues would hopefully be found. However, Springer had been releasing some guidance notes periodically which have been helping Handling Editors navigate the system better. More of this was canvassed. MW added that as EGAH moves to Ad-Hoc publishing in 2024; with rolling release of papers as against monthly issues, the papers from different SIs will be grouped as a collection on the EGAH website.

DP and AO agree that there is a need to keep the standard high for EGAH SIs; especially as a lot of authors are trying to use SIs to publish substandard papers as alluded to by AO.

CP submitted that though the substandard paper submissions and the many requests for SIs may be a hassle, it shows however that EGAH is a good journal that everyone wants to publish in. OH stated that EGAH should be getting a new Impact Factor soon, and it would be interesting to see what effects the latest changes would have. MW added that the IF for the journal may drop in 2024 as a result of the release of so many papers. This he said may be worth it as a 2-3 years investment into the quality and standard of the journal. AO commended the efforts of MW and DP in keeping EGAH a top-notch journal.

9. AO reiterated the progress that had been made on the ECRs. The *steering committee* set up met and decided that a meeting should be held with the ECRs, and to have them set up some sort of governance structure among themselves to sustain the drive, going forward. A more reliable, definitive database for the ECRs has been developed. AO also stated that the Society should be able to get volunteers to help OH with the website from the ECR group.

AA added that a lunch session is being organised at the Greece conference for the ECRs, which will be coordinated by KT. Other matters peculiar to the ECR group would be discussed at the lunch meeting. DP suggested that the ECRs should be tasked with being *ambassadors* to recruit other ECRs into the Society. MW reminisced on the initiatives set up in the past (e.g. the Writing

Skills Workshops; online meetings hosted by CP and MH, etc) in which ECRs were actively engaged. He however mentioned that such activities had not been done in a while. He encouraged new Board members who were beneficiaries of some of the ECR initiatives in the past to take up the challenge of the ECR group drive, and come up with initiatives of their own as a way of giving back to the Society. They could also be mentors to the new ECRs.

AA and KT will serve in advisory capacities to those who will be spearheading the ECR initiatives henceforth. AO suggested that a meeting should be organised with all the ECRs after the Greece conference.

**Actions:**

- 1. FA, MG, BK, and FO to be given tasks to perform for the ECR drive/initiatives.**
- 2. Meeting to be organised with the ECRs after the Greece conference.**

10. (a) The bid for SEGH Abuja 2024 was presented by AO. He stated that as a result of the transition in government in May 2023, there was renewed optimism in Nigeria and 2024 would be a great year to host SEGH in Nigeria. He harped on the experience that the Nigeria group has had in hosting many International Conferences in the recent past. He noted that Nigerian members of SEGH were key elements in the Organizing Committee of these conferences and thus, had ample experience. He however acknowledged the uniqueness of the SEGH Conferences and agreed that no two conferences are the same, while assuring the Board that members of the Organizing Committee would give their best in hosting a successful conference.

AO ended by inviting everyone to Nigeria, and hoped that Nigeria will get the support of the Board Members and other members of the Society when the Bid is presented at the Greece conference.

(b) The proposal for Board membership for Prof. Jayanta Biswas (India) was considered. His Profile had initially been sent to members. Members were asked to go through the proposal again while the Secretary sends a vote poll .

**Action: JO to send a vote poll on Jayanta Biswas' Board membership to members.**

12. The meeting was unanimously adjourned and ended at 2:30pm WAT.