

To: Secretary Generals and Presidents of Scientific Unions  
National Member contact points  
Interdisciplinary Body contact points  
Associate Member contact points

For Information, re. **travel visas to the USA**

26 February, 2009

Dear Colleagues,

There have recently been a number of cases of scientists being unable to obtain visas in time to allow them to attend meetings in the USA. These have mainly been the result of late visa applications. It is very frustrating for the individuals concerned but there is little that ICSU or the US-NAS can do to help scientists who apply late for visas.

The clear advice from the US State Department is that scientists should apply for entry visas to the USA a minimum of three months prior to the desired entry date. This applies particularly to nationals of certain countries, including China, India and Russia and, for which additional security clearance procedures and/or backlogs in applications, have led to extra delays in the visa approval process. There are also a limited number of countries, including Pakistan, for which visa approvals are taking even longer.

In addition to ensuring early applications from individuals, those with responsibility for organising international meetings in the USA are strongly encouraged to register these meetings via the US-NAS, at <http://www7.nationalacademies.org/visas/>.

To date, the problems that have been reported to ICSU relate mainly to meetings in the USA. However, security clearance for some nationalities, most notably Iranians, wanting to enter the European Union has also been tightened and it is likely that visa issuance periods will increase in many countries. Thus, it would be wise not only to adopt the minimum three-month visa application period as a general rule for all international meetings but also to make careful enquiries as to visa regulations and issuance times before deciding on a meeting destination.

Yours sincerely,



Carthage Smith  
Deputy Executive Director

**International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing**  
**Internationale Gesellschaft für Photogrammetrie und Fernerkundung**  
**Société Internationale de Photogrammétrie et de Télédétection**



**Headquarters 2008 – 2012**

**Chen Jun, Secretary General**

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<http://www.isprs.org>

Date: 2009/02/18

Dear ICSU colleagues,

As Secretary General of the International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ISPRS), I am writing to ask some help from ICSU for my and my colleague's visas to attend the ISPRS Council meeting in Baltimore, USA on March 6-16, 2009.

The ISPRS Council meeting will take place on March 7-13 in conjunction with Annual Conference 2009 of American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS). ISPRS Council members will attend the ASPRS Conference and some of the Conference's social activities.

Ms. Hu Junhong, Assistant to Secretary General at the ISPRS Headquarters, will join me for this trip to USA to help with the organizational work of the ISPRS Council meeting and my wife Mrs. Xie Bingyu will also accompany me.

We submitted our visa applications to the US Embassy in Beijing after we received the invitation letter from ASPRS Executive Director Jim Plaser. We were asked to go to the US Embassy for an interview on Feb. 9. At the interview we were told that the US State Council in Washington would need 9 to 12 weeks for administrative processing and applicants' background investigation. The visa officer of the USA Embassy asked us to withdraw our visa applications due to insufficient time for the above-mentioned processing and investigation.

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I am sure that you are aware of the importance of the Council meeting for an international organization like ISPRS and the importance of the Secretary General to be present at the Council meeting of the organization. Therefore, ISPRS and I would be very grateful if ICSU could take some actions to help solve our visa problem in any possible way.

For your reference, our visa application information is as below:

Name	Passport Number	Date of Birth
Prof. Chen Jun	P00745029	11 OCTOBER 1956
Ms. Hu Junhong	P00745030	10 JUNE 1974
Mrs. Xie Bingyu	G10822613	18 JANUARY 1955

Thank you very much in advance.

I look forward to your positive response and kind help.

Yours sincerely

Prof. Chen Jun  
Secretary General of ISPRS  
chenjun@nsdi.gov.cn;  
chenjun\_isprs@263.net

**Rohini RAO**

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**De:** Carthage SMITH  
**Envoyé:** mercredi 25 février 2009 09:32  
**À:** Qin Jiuyi; bg@astro.uu.se  
**Cc:** isprs@nsdi.gov.cn; chenjun@nsdi.gov.cn; Tish BAHMANI FARD; zhangk@psych.ac.cn; 'suxiaojun'; liangyn@cast.org.cn; Rohini RAO; Peter Schindler  
**Objet:** RE: visa matter of ISPRS meeting

Dear Juyi,

I have now heard back from US-NAS in relation to this. They have been in contact with their colleagues in the visa services at the US Department of State but as you will see from the response below, there is nothing that can be done given the short time interval (4 weeks) between the visa request and the travel dates.

Response to US-NAS enquiry from US visas services at the State Department:

“Prof Chen and Ms Hu were indeed told that there was no way their cases would be processed in time for an early March conference. Therefore their cases are pending and will remain “open” for a year, should they wish to travel at another time. They would just have to allow two to three months (at this moment) prior to travel to submit a new itinerary and restart the process on their applications.

Regarding Ms. Xie, her case is being processed because if she doesn't make it in time for the conference (and unfortunately she will not), she also wants to visit her son in the US.

There is no way we can turn around cases in less than a month, even if we didn't have a backlog, which as you know we do. Applicants in the sciences/tech fields need to apply two or three months out (three is better). This is our reality at the moment. We are trying to fix it with our partners. It is very frustrating to us as well, because we know that the results have so many negative impacts.

I wish I could give you a more positive response.”

I suggest that you send a notice to all your scientists involved in ICSU affairs and and/or likely to travel to the USA in the foreseeable future, warning them that they must make visa applications at least 3mths in advance.

I regret that there is nothing more that we can do on these cases but hopefully they can at least serve as a useful lesson for the future.

Best wishes,

Carthage

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**De :** Qin Jiuyi [<mailto:qinjiuyi@cast.org.cn>]  
**Envoyé :** 19 February 2009 05:31

**À** : Carthage SMITH; bg@astro.uu.se

**Cc** : isprs@nsdi.gov.cn; chenjun@nsdi.gov.cn; Tish BAHMANI FARD; zhangk@psych.ac.cn; 'suxiaojun'; liangyn@cast.org.cn

**Objet** : visa matter of ISPRS meeting

**Importance** : Haute

To: Carthage Smith  
Deputy Executive Director of ICSU

Dr. Bengt Gustafsson  
Chair, Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in the conduct of Science  
ICSU

Dear Carthage and Bengt

Attached please find a letter from Prof. Chen Jun, Secretary General of ISPRS concerning his US visa application problem.

As we all know, ICSU upholds Principle of the Universality of Science, which encompasses the rights of scientists both to freely associate and to freely pursue their science. It is our sincere hope that ICSU and Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in the conduct of Science could take some action on this issue.

If you need any further information, you may either contact me or Prof. Chen Jun(chenjun@nsdi.gov.cn) directly.

Thank you for your kind assistance.

Best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Qin Jiuyi

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Qin Jiuyi  
Deputy Director  
Division of International Organizations, Department of International Affairs  
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