Dear Members of the ICSE Community:

*As COVID-19 continues to have an impact around the globe, we hope that you and your loved ones remain safe and well, and we hope for the speedy recovery of those who may have fallen ill. Matters such as the one we are about to discuss here clearly take on a lesser level of importance in the face of concerns such as these.*

As you know, we have been looking for alternatives to holding ICSE 2020 in Seoul in May. Now, with additional travel bans in place and no clear resolution to the spread of the coronavirus in South Korea in sight, it is clear that remaining in Seoul in May is no longer feasible, and we have no choice but to find such alternatives.

To address the issues involved in relocating or re-configuring ICSE 2020, we have formed an ICSE 2020 Emergency Response Committee (ERC), consisting of several individuals who are involved with ICSE.  The members of the ERC are named at the end of this message. The ERC has now reached a decision regarding ICSE 2020:

**We have decided to reschedule ICSE 2020 for October 5-11, in Seoul.**

We do, however, have several contingency plans in place.  To understand the reasoning behind our decision and those contingency plans, and to find answers to several logistical questions that many of you no doubt have, please continue reading.


Initially, one of the possibilities the ERC considered was to retain the current dates for ICSE 2020 and find a different location for ICSE elsewhere in the world. In view of the current spread of COVID-19, we no longer think that this choice is a wise option. Even if we could find a venue large enough for ICSE in May, in a country that is currently not substantially impacted by the coronavirus, it is entirely possible that by May, that location may no longer be safe.

We have also considered mechanisms for holding the conference "virtually" -- a course of action that some other smaller conferences have chosen. However, transforming a conference that has 10 different tracks and 300 different papers, plus 20 workshops and 10 co-located events, and that is attended by a truly international audience of over 1500 participants, is not technically feasible in a short time frame.

For these reasons, we have decided to reschedule ICSE 2020 for the period of October 5-11, in Seoul, in the same venue as previously planned.  The contract is still under negotiation, but we have no reason to think that it won't be completed.

In making this decision, we are also responding to the views of the ICSE 2020 Community as expressed in the recent poll that many of you responded to. The central question in that poll was: "What should we do with ICSE 2020?" Respondents were asked to list their first and second choices from among five alternatives. There have been 1,638 responses as of this writing, and among those responses, the *first choices* expressed were as follows:

- 515 (31.6%) -- Move ICSE 2020 to a later date in 2020 in South Korea
- 464 (28.5%) -- Hold ICSE 2020 virtually
- 454 (27.9%) -- Move ICSE 2020 to a different location at the same time
- 120 ( 7.4%) -- Hold ICSE as planned
- 77 ( 4.7%) -- Cancel ICSE 2020 completely.

The foregoing poll was not available to members of the ICSE community who are currently in China, so we set up another version of the poll that was accessible to them. There have been 36 responses to that poll as of this writing, and among those, the first choices expressed were as follows:

- 21 (58.3%) -- Move ICSE 2020 to a later date in 2020 in South Korea
- 8 (22.2%) -- Hold ICSE 2020 virtually
- 5 (13.9%) -- Move ICSE 2020 to a different location at the same time
- 1 ( 2.8%) -- Hold ICSE as planned
- 1 ( 2.8%) -- Cancel ICSE 2020 completely.

We also separately contacted the General Chairs of all of the ICSE 2020 Workshops and Co-Located events, asking the same questions plus one additional one. There have been 26 responses as of this writing, and among those, the *first choices* expressed were as follows:

- 12 (46.2%) -- Move ICSE 2020 to a later date in 2020 in South Korea
- 7 (26.9%) -- Hold ICSE 2020 virtually
- 3 (11.5%) -- Move ICSE 2020 to a different location at the same time
- 3 (11.5%) -- Move ICSE 2020 to a different location at a later time
- 1 ( 3.8%) -- Hold ICSE as planned
- 0 ( 0.0%) -- Cancel ICSE 2020 completely.

Our decision to move ICSE 2020 to a later date in South Korea thus complies with a plurality of our respondents' first choice to the options we listed, in all three of the foregoing cases. It also complies with a majority of those first choices in favoring a face-to-face meeting rather than a virtual meeting.

We are also mindful, however, that there are no certainties as to what the progression of COVID-19 may be over the next several months. While prior coronaviruses (e.g., SARS) have largely dissipated by late spring or early summer, and we can hope that this pattern continues, we can't be *sure* what will happen. Nor can we be *sure* what will happen in various geographic

areas of the world. Finally, even if COVID-19 dissipates, there may be some participants who simply can't make it to the rescheduled conference.

For that reason, we are also planning the following:

1. For those who ultimately cannot attend ICSE in Seoul, we will provide, to the extent possible, support for virtual participation.

2. On July 5, 2020, 90 days ahead of the planned opening of the conference, if concerns over safety in relation to COVID-19 have not been allayed where the location in South Korea is concerned, and if we can find other prospective locations in other parts of the world where the concerns have been allayed, we will attempt to move the conference to such a location.  Again, if we are able to do that, we will provide support for virtual participation to the extent possible.

3. In the event that no safe locale can be found at all on July 5, we will restructure the conference's events to include some combination of virtualization, shifting of events to other conferences, and other tactics.

There are many logistical questions that remain to be solved in order to relocate ICSE in time, and we hope you can be patient while we work to address those.  However, there are several issues that may be of immediate concern to you that we can tell you about our plans for.

1. *Registration.*  There will be a new early registration deadline, and it will be no earlier than August 1st, 2020 -- this is well after any further decisions would be made about the conference's location. You will have plenty of time to see what events unfold between now and then, and make a better-informed decision on whether to attend.

2. *Registration refunds.*  All conference registrations that have been made to date will initially be rolled over to apply to the rescheduled conference.  We will, however, make a mechanism available so that registrants who cannot attend the rescheduled conference can receive a full refund of their registration fees, without penalty. (We need to work out the logistics for this, so please stand by for further instructions.)

3. *Co-Located Events and Workshops*. We will be in touch with the General Chairs of all Co-Located Events and ICSE Workshops within the next two days to determine what courses of action they may wish to take. (Organizers who are considering shifting to other venues, however, may wish to consider the ramifications for their authors and participants who may have also intended to attend other ICSE events.)

4. *Proceedings*. We intend to publish the ICSE 2020 proceedings as planned, some time in May.  Those of you who have had papers accepted to tracks in the main conference may safely list them as "to appear", because they *will* appear. This will also apply to papers

accepted to any Workshops or Co-Located Events that *do* choose to relocate, physically, with ICSE.

5. *Journal-1st Presentations*. Presenters of Journal-1st papers may withdraw their intent to present; however, at this point in time we cannot guarantee that we will be able to support virtual presentations of Journal-1st papers.

6. *Author Registration*. We will continue to request that an author of each paper published in the ICSE Proceedings, or scheduled to be presented, register for the conference. However, we will consider implementing different registration rates in cases where no physical participation at the conference is possible.

7. *ICSE 2021*. There is nothing in our decision that carries any implications for ICSE 2021 in Madrid. Any decisions about ICSE 2021 will be made independently by the ICSE 2021 organizers, in concert with the ICSE Steering Committee.

Clearly, there will be other logistical questions and problems that we have not yet addressed, as well as problems that we have not even imagined. We will get to those as we learn about them.

We know that some of you are feeling frustrated by the length of time it has taken us to make this decision, but this has not been an easy decision to make, and gathering the information necessary to support the decision has been time-consuming. A conference of the size and scope of ICSE has many complexities to consider. Above all else, our concern for the health of all prospective ICSE 2020 attendees, as well as for the health of the ICSE conference series itself, has required us to think carefully, and act judiciously.

We hope to see you at the Flagship Conference in Software Engineering -- ICSE 2020 -- in Seoul, South Korea in October.

Sincerely,

The ICSE 2020 Emergency Response Committee:

  Gregg Rothermel      (ICSE 2020 General co-Chair)
  Doo-Hwan Bae         (ICSE 2020 General co-Chair)
  Jane Cleland-Huang (ICSE 2020 Technical Program co-Chair)
  Darko Marinov        (ICSE 2020 Technical Program co-Chair)
  Laurie Williams      (ICSE Steering Committee Chair)
  Tom Zimmermann    (ACM SIGSOFT Chair)
  Rick Kazman         (IEEE TCSE Chair)
  James Peeples       (ACM)
  Silvia Ceballos      (IEEE)