

**The following four plenary sessions consisting of seven blocks were held at WAC-9:**

- WAC Plenary #1: The special plenary on the Russian invasion of Ukraine (Moderator: Jan Turek, with opening speech by: H. E. Mr. Yevhen Perebyinis (Ambassador of Ukraine in the Czech Republic), followed by reports and testimonies of Ukrainian archaeologists, presenting the heritage damage caused by the Russian invasion.
- WAC Plenary #2/1: Special Plenary 'Maya Land Rights and crafting a Maya future' (Moderator: Filiberto Penados)
- WAC Plenary #2/2: Wars, Conflicts, Crises, and Archaeologies (Moderator: Koji Mizoguchi)
- WAC Plenary #3/1: Award ceremony: Peter Ucko Memorial Award (Awarded: Claire Smith) Joan Gero Book Award (Awarded: Kathryn Weedman Arthur)
- WAC Plenary #3/2: Commemorating the Late Professor Michael Day and the Early Days of WAC (Presented by: Bernard Wood & Peter Stone)
- WAC Plenary #4/1: Peter Ucko Memorial Lecture Weber Ndoro: 'Archaeology, Heritage, Conservation ... and Africa'
- WAC Plenary #4/2: - How WAC should react to ongoing and future wars and conflicts, and other challenges (Moderator: Koji Mizoguchi *et al.*)



FIGURE 2: WAC-9 delegates. First left: WAC former president Claire Smith, the main organizer of WAC-10 2024; Second left: WAC-9 Academic Secretary Jan Turek; First right: WAC Secretary Ndrukuyakhe Ndlovu (photo: P. Závodná)

### **Long way to Prague**

The way to Prague was not straight forward. In March 2020, when we were finalizing preparations, 172 academic sessions were approved by the Scientific Committee and over 1200 WAC members submitted their papers. Then the Covid-19 pandemic started, and everything suddenly froze.

All we could do at the time was to hope that schools would reopen, planes would start flying, and that we would meet again and further develop our friendship. We now know that it was a historic lesson that alerted us to the vulnerability of global travel and that the opportunities we had previously taken for granted could be dramatically truncated in a week. Globally, we have gone through restrictions, fears, and tragedies.

WAC-9 was first postponed until 2021; it was a difficult but inevitable decision, but it also contained the hope that we would soon see a light at the end of the dark tunnel, such as vaccine, a cure, and a solution that would return life to the way it used to be before the pandemic. However, the Coronavirus was indeed a powerful adversary and we had no choice but to postpone our meeting for another year until 2022. This was already a really serious limitation for our community and many of us lost contact and desire in the global meeting. Many sessions were withdrawn, many organizers lost interest, some colleagues changed or lost their jobs. Life became different than we were used to.

Hopefully, we have come out of the two pandemic years strengthened. We have learned how to communicate virtually, and for many international projects and conferences, online collaboration is a great asset. Yes, even conferences and congresses will not be the same as before. People still prefer face-to-face contact and we are starting to travel again, but for a global community like WAC, virtual communication is an essential part of the future. Perhaps we will also appreciate the opportunities for face-to-face meetings and friendships even more. Only time will tell us what the future of our communication will be. The main message of the WAC-9 is that we survived, and we proved our global archaeological community is able to sustain and continue for many years to come.

The positive news is that the next WAC-10 will be held in Adelaide, South Australia in 2024.

See you all soon Down Under!

Jan Turek  
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*Charles University, Prague*  
& WAC-9 Academic Secretary