

# AfAS

## African Astronomical Society

<https://africanastronomicalsociety.org>

### AfAS Newsletter | Volume 01 | Issue 01



#### Message from the President

I am honoured and privileged to assume the role of President of AfAS since March 2019 following the Astronomy in Africa meeting, which was hosted at SAAO in Cape Town, South Africa. I am pleased to inform you that the Executive Committee of AfAS and the Interim Secretariat, hosted by the South African Department of Science and Innovation, are working around the clock and meeting regularly to ensure that we deliver on the expectations of the African astronomy community and the growth and success of the Society. The Executive Committee has held a total of ten meetings since being elected in March 2019.

AfAS is an association of professional astronomers, and has an important role to play in the future of the astronomy discipline on the continent. The Executive Committee cannot accomplish the mission of AfAS in isolation and for the continued health of this Society, your active participation is essential. I hope you enjoy this very first issue of the AfAS newsletter and find it informative. Please be on the lookout for AfAS calls and future issues of our newsletter.

**AfAS President:** J. Mimouni



## Structures to implement the objectives of the African Astronomical Society

The Executive Committee (EC) of the African Astronomical Society (AfAS), is pleased to inform the African astronomy community of the establishment of sub-committees, which will be mandated with implementing the objectives of AfAS as set out in the constitution of the society. While the EC will continue to ensure good governance and adhere to values of best practice, the established sub-committees will take a more hands on approach and be in charge of specific projects or areas of development for the Society.

Following a call for input from the African astronomy community, the EC resolved to establish the following sub-committees and assigned the respective coordinators for each one:

- **Membership committee** - Sarah Abotsi-Masters  
[sarahatmasters@gmail.com](mailto:sarahatmasters@gmail.com)
- **Communications committee** - Charles Mpho Takalana  
[Charles.Takalani@dst.gov.za](mailto:Charles.Takalani@dst.gov.za)
- **Education committee** - Palesa Nombula  
[palesa.nombula@gmail.com](mailto:palesa.nombula@gmail.com)
- **Fund-Raising committee** - Takalani Nemaungani  
[Takalani.Nemaungani@dst.gov.za](mailto:Takalani.Nemaungani@dst.gov.za)
- **Outreach committee** - Jamal Mimouni  
[jamalmimouni@yahoo.com](mailto:jamalmimouni@yahoo.com)
- **Science committee** - Lerothodi Leeuw  
[lerothodi@gmail.com](mailto:lerothodi@gmail.com)

*“Moving towards implementation and meeting the expectations of the African astronomy community”*

**Applications for AfAS Membership are now open**

AfAS invites you to make an application to become a member of the Society. We call for you to apply for membership online by going to the [AfAS website](#), where you can also find detailed information on the various membership categories. We have opened applications for the following categories:

- Full Membership
- Associate Membership
- Student Membership

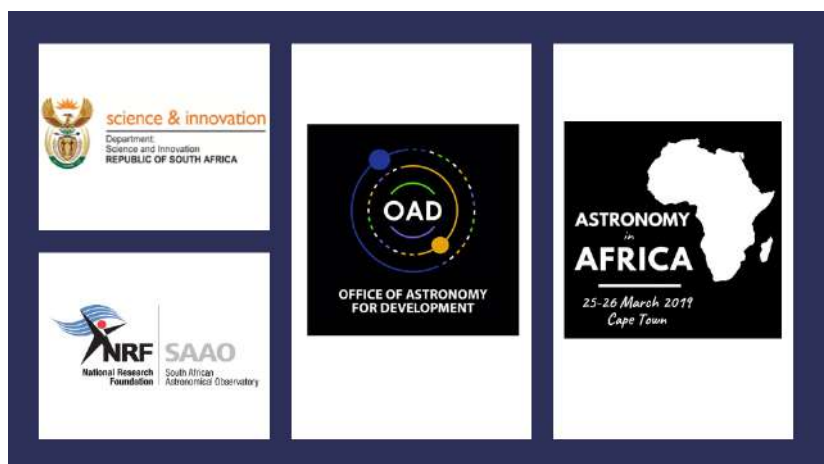
The Membership Committee of AfAS will review all applications. Thereafter, all applicants will receive a notification with the decision of the Membership Committee regarding their application.

The Membership fees for the year October 2019 - September 2020 will be free of charge. AfAS will discuss and announce the annual membership fees and benefits at the next General Assembly.

The above-mentioned sub-committees were identified for establishment to realise the Society’s long-term plans. The sub-committees are answerable to the EC of the society and will communicate with the African astronomy community on each respective topic. The coordinators assigned to each sub-committee are members of the AfAS EC and will take responsibility of each respective sub-committee and lead the process of recruiting sub-committee members.

AfAS is a progressive and inclusive society and in light of this, the EC is undergoing a process of identifying and recruiting individuals from the African and international astronomy communities to serve in the sub-committees as members of the committees or advisors. The EC seeks to attract committed individuals who will be dedicated to realising the vision of the AfAS to create a globally competitive and collaborative astronomy community in Africa, which will be the voice of astronomy on the continent and contribute to addressing the challenges faced by Africa through astronomy. The EC of AfAS therefore invites interested individuals who wish to serve on any of these committees to contact Charles Takalana (AfAS Interim Administrative Officer) at [Charles.Takalani@dst.gov.za](mailto:Charles.Takalani@dst.gov.za) (Phone: +27 66 479 3374).

**The Relaunch of AfAS at the Astronomy in Africa meeting**



On 25-26 March 2019, the Astronomy in Africa business meeting was held in Cape Town at the South African Astronomical Observatory. The meeting was sponsored by the South African Department of Science and Innovation with the support of the National Research Foundation and organised by the IAU Office of Astronomy for Development (IAU-OAD), it was attended by around 80 participants from 20 nations including astronomical scientists, public stakeholders and research organisations. The discussions at the meeting were

## Meet the Executive Committee Members of AfAS



**President:**  
**Jamal Mimouni**  
**(Algeria)**



**Vice-President:**  
**Lerothodi Leeuw**  
**(South Africa)**



**General Secretary:**  
**Sarah Abotsi-Masters**  
**(Ghana)**



**Assistant General Secretary:**  
**Charles Mpho Takalana**  
**(South Africa)**

based on massive international projects on the continent such as the Square Kilometre Array (SKA), the VLBI network and the Southern African Large Telescope. Several African countries are already involved in these projects and the scientists are leading globally in the research. These complement capacity building initiatives to train young Africans, including DARA's Newton Fund program in astronomy, engineering and related fields. Scientific potential of other African facilities in countries like Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mozambique, Morocco, Egypt, Algeria, to name of few, were also discussed during the meeting.



**Participants of the Astronomy in Africa meeting in Cape Town, Mar 25-26, 2019**

After two days of intense presentations and discussions that led to the adoption of a new constitution for AfAS, this meeting, which focused on strategy, policy and governance issues related to the field, as well as planning the future of astronomy on the continent, finally relaunched AfAS and elected a new Executive Committee. Another key outcome of this meeting was offer from the South African government to host a staffed secretariat of AfAS for the first 3 year , through Department of Science and Innovation (DSI).

The members of the AfAS Executive Committee elected at this meeting are people of various expertise in academic research, teaching, public interactions and outreaching. They are as diverse as one would expect from a continental association which as we believe is truly representative of Africa in its diversity and human potential. As the host of the AfAS Secretariat, Mr Takalani Nemaungani (DSI Director: Multi-wavelength Astronomy) serves as an Ex-Officio member on the AfAS Executive Committee representing the DSI. Mr. Kevin Govender (Director: IAU-OAD) and Mr. Yunus Manjoo (NRF Director: Business Systems and Analysis) provide support to the Interim Secretariat. This issue of the newsletter features a section to to familiarise the African astronomy community with the AfAS Executive committee members.

## Meet the Executive Committee Members of AfAS



**Public Relations and Education Officer:**  
**Olayinka Fagbemi**  
(Nigeria)



**Early Career Representative:**  
**Zara Randriamanakoto**  
(Madagascar)



**Additional Member:**  
**Palesa Nombula**  
(South Africa)



**Additional Member:**  
**Etsegenet Getachew**  
(Ethiopia)

## Astronomy in Africa Science Business Meeting: 10 - 11 October 2019

The Astronomy in Africa science business meeting, will take place from 10-11 October 2019 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This meeting aims to promote AfAS to the science community and to highlight astronomy in Ethiopia to the AfAS and international community. The meeting will be led by the AfAS Science Committee and focus on the business of AfAS, the role of AfAS as far as the science is concerned, feature discussions on the science goals of AfAS, and the development of an AfAS science Strategy for Professional Astronomy.

This meeting is a continuation of the Astronomy in Africa business meeting that was hosted at the South African Astronomical Observatory in Cape Town from 25-26 March 2019 and it will bring together African astronomy professionals and the international astronomy community, it will enable discussions around scientific issues and serve as a platform for AfAS consult on its envisaged science strategy. The Astronomy in Africa science business meeting will be hosted alongside the IAU356 symposium in Ethiopia on 'Nuclear Activity in Galaxies Across Cosmic Time', which will take place from 7-11 October 2019. This will create a platform to foster partnerships and collaborations with international scientific bodies as well as participants of the IAU356 symposium. Both meetings will take place at the Jupiter International Hotel in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The Astronomy in Africa science business meeting will be hosted by Ethiopian Space Science and Technology Institute (ESSTI) and co-organised by the African Astronomical Society (AfAS), the East Africa Regional office of Astronomy for Development (EA-ROAD), Ethiopian Space Science Society (ESSS) and Ministry of innovation and Technology (MiNT).

The AfAS Science Business meeting has the following 4 basic sessions:

1. AfAS Science Strategy
2. Current status of Astronomy in Africa
3. Forum discussion about AfAS's Science business strategy
4. Scientific Partnerships and Collaboration

For more information on the meeting visit:

<http://aslc.essti.gov.et/afas/>

Alternatively contact: Alemiye Mamo [alemiyem@essti.gov.et](mailto:alemiyem@essti.gov.et) or Charles Takalani [Charles.Takalani@dst.gov.za](mailto:Charles.Takalani@dst.gov.za)

**Meet the Executive Committee members of AfAS:**



**Ex-Officio: DSI Representative  
Takalani Nemaungani  
(South Africa)**

**The General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union to be hosted on African soil for the first time in 2024**

The XXXII IAU General Assembly will take place from 5 to 16 August 2024 in Cape Town, South Africa. The 2024 General Assembly, which will be hosted for the first time on African soil, is an opportunity to give voice to Africa in the global astronomical endeavour and bring attention to the continent's excellent science and education. This meeting is an opportunity for African astronomers to take part in one of the world's biggest astronomy meetings and it will contribute to a lasting legacy of astronomy on the continent. As AfAS we are excited and look forward to welcoming the world to our beautiful continent, Africa.

**Updates on previous AfAS calls:**

**(I) Call for a new AfAS Logo**

On 22 May 2019 AfAS opened a call for entries for a new logo design for AfAS, which closed on 31 July 2019. The AfAS Executive Committee has since established a team of independent and impartial adjudicators to form part of the Logo Review Panel. The panel will scrutinise all logo designs submitted to AfAS in response to the call and recommend a new logo to the AfAS Executive Committee from the submitted designs. The winning design will be communicated in the next issue of the AfAS newsletter. AfAS would like to thank everyone who participated.

**(II) Call for Pan-African Contest for Amateur Astronomers/Education & Public Outreach Individuals**

On 15 August 2019 AfAS opened a call for entries looking to sponsor return flight tickets for proposed exhibitions of original projects or high impact public talks on astronomy related subjects, which would be showcased at the 17<sup>th</sup> National Festival in Popular Astronomy - taking place from 03 to 05 October 2019 in Constantine, Algeria. The call closed on 10 September 2019. The AfAS Executive committee is pleased to announce that a proposal submitted by Mr. Andoniaina Rajaonarivelo from Madagascar was successful and his exhibition and presentation will be showcased at the event in Algeria. AfAS takes this opportunity to congratulate him and wish him well for his presentation. We will cover his experience in the next issue of the AfAS newsletter. AfAS would like to thank everyone who participated.



**Save-the-date:  
Conference of the African  
Astronomical Society**

The next AfAS conference (**AfAS-2020**) will take place from 16 to 19 March 2020 at the South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) in Cape Town, South Africa.

The basic programme will consist of:

- **Science talks** (2 days)
- **Education, Development and Outreach talks** (1 day)
- **AfAS General Assembly** (half day)
- **Networking, side meetings, hack time** (half day)

**Contact Us:**

The AfAS EC wants to hear from the African astronomy community. If you have any comments, ideas or suggestions on topics you wish to see covered in future communication, do not hesitate to send them through.

**Contact:**

**Visit:**

<https://www.africanastronomicalsociety.org>

**Charles Takalana, Interim Administrative Officer**

**Phone: +27 66 479 3374**

**Email: [Charles.Takalani@dst.gov.za](mailto:Charles.Takalani@dst.gov.za)**

**Sarah Abotsi-Masters, AfAS General Secretary**

**Email: [sarahatmasters@gmail.com](mailto:sarahatmasters@gmail.com)**

**Jamal Mimouni, AfAS President**

**Email: [jamalmimouni@yahoo.com](mailto:jamalmimouni@yahoo.com)**



*Save the date!*



**XXXII IAU GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**5 - 16 AUGUST 2024  
CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA**

[www.astronomy2024.org](http://www.astronomy2024.org)



**CONFERENCE OF THE AFRICAN  
ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY**

**AfAS  
2020**

**CAPE TOWN**

**South Africa**

**SOUTH AFRICAN ASTRONOMICAL  
OBSERVATORY (SAAO)**

**16 -19 MARCH 2020**

