Constitution of the African Astronomical Society

Article 1: Name
The name of the society (hereinafter referred to as “The Society”) shall be AFRICAN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY (AfAS)

Article 2: Vision
To be the voice of the astronomy profession in Africa in order to promote and support research on the continent, and to facilitate the use of astronomy in addressing the challenges faced by Africa.

Article 3: Mission
The African Astronomical Society (AfAS) seeks to organize and network the community of research astronomers and astrophysicists on the African continent and throughout the Diaspora to advance astronomy research and address the challenges faced by Africa. The AfAS seeks to advocate for and develop increased resources for astronomy and astrophysics research for and within Africa and the Diaspora. The AfAS also seeks to grow the number of Africans engaged in astronomy and astrophysics research and to bridge the African astronomy community to the global astronomical community. The AfAS will support related efforts and Organisations including but not limited to those associated with growing the astronomical profession in Africa, and those dedicated to astronomy, physics, engineering, mathematics and computation education at all levels.

Article 4: Objectives
The Society will fulfill its vision and mission by:
- encouraging the use of astronomy for socio-economic development
- cultivating collaboration among countries in Africa, especially between the more developed and the less developed countries, as well as collaborations between Africa and the rest of the world.
- inspiring individual countries in Africa, as well as the African Union (AU), to appreciate the significance of astronomy for society
- strengthening the teaching of mathematics, physics and other sciences in schools through the use of astronomy
- stimulating global citizenship, awareness and tolerance through the appreciation of the beauty and scale of the universe
- supporting collaborative international astronomical activities and projects in Africa
- using astronomy to attract African youth into science, engineering and technology careers
- encouraging students to pursue careers in astronomy
- serving as the interface between the AU and astronomy related activities
- encouraging governmental and intergovernmental (AU) investment in astronomy related activities
- encouraging involvement in, and collaboration with, relevant organisations such as International Astronomical Union (IAU); National Society of Black Physicists (NSBP); African Physical Society (AfPS); and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- organizing meetings and events pertaining to astronomy
- providing mentoring, leadership and guidance to young astronomers
- increasing the number of astronomical facilities in Africa
- highlighting and disseminating the scholarship of African astronomers
- increasing the number of African astronomers as well as highly qualified astronomers working in Africa
- encouraging the production and dissemination of scientific works by African astronomers
- safeguarding astronomical sites in Africa
- identifying and preserving indigenous astronomical knowledge
Article 13: The Treasurer

The Treasurer must be a Full or Associate member of The Society and shall administer the finances of The Society in collaboration with the President and the Executive Secretary. In this, he or she shall present a financial report on all meetings of the Executive Committee. He or she shall also present an audited report on the accounts of The Society to all ordinary meetings of the General Assembly. The candidate Assistant Treasurer shall be selected every three years from among potential candidates presented to the Executive Committee by the Nominating Committee. The Assistant Treasurer shall take office only upon confirmation of the General Assembly and serves for one term. The Assistant Treasurer becomes the Treasurer after the completion of one term in office. The Assistant Executive Secretary is limited to one term in office.

Article 14: The Public Relations and Education Officer

The Public Relations and Education Officer shall serve as the primary spokesperson of the organization, shall coordinate the Society’s public relations communications, and shall coordinate the education and outreach activities of the various regional organizations representative of The Society. A candidate Public Relations and Education Officer shall be selected every three years from among potential candidates presented to the Executive Committee by the Nominating Committee. The candidate Public Relations and Education Officer shall take office only upon confirmation of the General Assembly. There shall be no limit to the number of terms that the Public Relations and Education Officer may serve.

Article 15: The Past-President

The Past-President shall be a regular voting member of the Executive Committee. The Past-President is limited to one term in office.

Article 16: The Regional Congress

There shall be a Regional Congress of The Society. The Regional Assemblies shall independently elect their representative to the Regional Congress. The Regional Representatives must be Full members of The Society. Regional representatives and Chairpersons of the Scientific Division shall present reports of their work to the General Assembly. No regional representative or Chairperson of a Scientific Division shall hold the same office for more than two consecutive periods separating an ordinary General Assembly.

It is recommended to the Regional Assemblies that three (3) Regional Representatives be designated for serving on the Executive Committee. Of these three (3), one shall be the “Primary Representative” to the Executive Committee while the other two are alternates, designated as the “First Alternate” and the “Second Alternate,” who may stand in, in the event that the Primary Representative is unable to attend an official meeting.

Article 17: The Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee shall be responsible for presenting potential candidates for office to the Executive Committee. The Nominating Committee shall be selected from among the Officers of the Scientific Divisions of The Society such that the membership of the Nominating Committee is representative of the six regions of The Society as designated in Article 6. The members of the Nominating Committee shall not be current members of the Executive Committee with the exception of the President who shall preside over the Nominating Committee. No members of the Nominating Committee shall serve on the Nominating Committee for more than two consecutive terms of office.

Article 18: Term of Office

A “term of office” shall consist of three years, specifically the period separating two consecutive ordinary General Assemblies.

Article 19: Ad-hoc Committee

The General Assembly and/or the Executive Committee may appoint ad-hoc Committees. An ad-hoc Committee of The Society shall normally present the report of its work to the organ of The Society that appoints it.
Article 5: Membership
The membership of The Society shall consist of the following categories:

1. Full Membership
Full membership is open to any person deemed capable of preparing an acceptable scientific paper on astronomy or a related branch of science. Supporting evidence for nomination to Full Membership should include at least one of the following:
(i) PhD in astronomy or closely related field;
(ii) independent or senior authorship of acceptable, refereed, published astronomy paper(s);
(iii) detailed evidence of significant contribution to professional astronomy in forms other than research publication.

2. Associate Membership
Associate Membership is open to any professional in a related field, who is no longer a student. This person should be actively involved in the advancement of astronomy or a related science.

3. Education Affiliate Membership
Education Affiliate membership is open to persons professionally engaged in astronomy-related education and public outreach and whose principal employment is at community colleges, elementary and secondary schools, science centres, museums, planetaria, or other similar bodies.

4. Student Membership
This category is open to tertiary level students of astronomy and related fields.

5. Membership of Non-professional Astronomers
This category is open to amateur astronomers, high-school students, knowledgeable individuals in activities of astronomical relevance, and other astronomy enthusiasts not pursuing a degree in astronomy or a related science.

6. Honorary Membership
This category of membership may be bestowed upon individuals who have shown exemplary contribution to the field and/or The Society as judged by the Nominating Committee of The Society. Honorary membership may be bestowed upon an individual only upon two-thirds vote of the Executive Committee and majority vote of the General Assembly.

Article 6: Organisation
For the purposes of Organisation and running of The Society, the African continent shall be divided into the following regions, including the African Diaspora (as defined in the by-laws of The Society):

1. Western Africa
2. Eastern Africa
3. Central Africa
4. Northern Africa
5. Southern Africa
6. African Diaspora

Article 7: Committees
There shall be committees, which will be determined by the Executive Committee.

Article 8: The General Assembly
The Society shall convene every three years, an ordinary General Assembly made up of all members of The Society. The agenda of a session of the General Assembly shall be drawn up by the Executive Committee and distributed to members at least three (3) months before the opening of the General Assembly. All attempts will be made to link the time and venue of the General Assembly to a major astronomical meeting on the continent (e.g. Middle East and Africa Regional IAU Meeting). A Quorum of a General Assembly shall be one-quarter (25%) of the membership.
Decisions of the General Assembly shall be by a simple majority vote of Full and Associate members present and voting.

**Article 9: The Executive Committee**

a). There shall be an Executive Committee of The Society, which shall consist of:

1. President
2. Vice-President (who is also President-elect)
3. Executive Secretary
4. Treasurer
5. Public Relations and Education Officer
6. The immediate past President of The Society
7. Regional Congress shall consist of four (4) individuals

b). Members of the Executive Committee shall begin their terms at the end of the ordinary General Assembly during which they are elected. No member of the Executive Committee shall hold the same office for more than two consecutive terms separating an ordinary General Assembly.

c). The Executive Committee shall organize and handle all matters relating to international connections and external relations on behalf of The Society. One-half of the membership of the executive committee shall constitute a quorum.

d). The Executive Committee shall elect a Chair for each committee of The Society, based on nominations from the Nominating Committee.

e). There shall be the following ex-Officio members of the Executive Committee:

1. The immediate Past-Executive Secretary
2. An Assistant Executive Secretary
3. An Assistant Treasurer

**Article 10: The President**

The President shall be the Chief Executive of The Society and must be a Full Member. He or she shall normally preside at all meetings of the Executive Committee, the Council and the General Assembly. The President is not a regular voting member of the Executive Committee. The President may vote, however, to break a tie in any votes of the Executive Committee. The President takes office upon completion of a three-year term as the Vice President. The President is limited to one term in office.

**Article 11: The Vice-President, who is also President-elect**

The Vice-President should be elected every three years from among the regional representatives constituting the Regional Congress and must be a Full Member. In the absence of the President, a Vice-President shall preside over the Executive Committee, Council or General Assembly. The Vice-President is selected by the Executive Committee from among the members of the Regional Congress and is limited to one term in office.

**Article 12: The Executive Secretary**

The Executive Secretary must be a Full or Associate member of The Society and shall be responsible for the day-to-day matters of The Society. The Executive Secretary shall act as liaison between The Society and the Regional Representatives, Chairpersons of Panels, Ad-hoc Committees of The Society, and affiliated Organisations. The candidate Assistant Executive Secretary shall be selected every three years from among potential candidates presented to the Executive Committee by the Nominating Committee. The Assistant Executive Secretary shall take office only upon confirmation of the General Assembly and serves for one term. The Assistant Executive Secretary becomes the Executive Secretary after the completion of one term in office. The Assistant Executive Secretary is limited to one term in office.
Article 20: Finance

a) The revenue of the society shall consist of such donations and subsidies as are accepted by the Executive Committee and by subscriptions as shall be decided by the General Assembly from time to time.

b) The General Assembly shall approve the appointments of external Auditors for The Society.

c) The Society shall open and operate bank accounts at the time and places that shall be determined by the Executive Committee.

Article 21: Scientific Divisions

The activities in the various astronomical sub-disciplines of The Society shall be coordinated through the Scientific Divisions. These Divisions shall each focus on a scientific theme. The Scientific Divisions are designated as the following:

1. Stars and planets
2. Galaxies
3. Cosmology
4. Instrumentation
5. Education

As The Society grows, these Divisions may act as umbrellas for one or more Commissions, each focusing on a narrower scientific or organizational theme.

All Full and Associate members of The Society must join at least one of the Scientific Divisions of The Society. Other members of The Society may also join one or more of the Scientific Divisions of The Society.

Article 22: Elections

The General Secretary shall circulate information (including nomination forms) about elections and members of The Society at least three months before the opening of an ordinary General Assembly. Nominations of the members of the Executive Committee shall be made on prescribed forms obtainable from the General Secretary. Nomination forms duly completed must be deposited with the General Secretary at least forty-eight (48) hours before any election. The General Secretary shall circulate the completed nomination forms to members of the General Assembly at least twenty-four (24) hours before elections are held. Voting shall be by secret ballot.

Article 23: Sponsors

Institutions, organizations, or individuals who support the AfAS through endorsements or financial contributions of a minimum amount as specified in the By-Laws of The Society shall be considered Sponsors of The Society and shall receive the benefits thereof as specified in the By-Laws of The Society according to their respective levels of support.

Article 24: The Interim Period

During the “interim period” from 16 December 2010 until the formation of first Executive Committee, the business of The Society will be handled in accordance with the “Rules of the Transitional Period of the African Astronomical Society” document as approved by majority vote of the Interim Working Group (IWG). Once the regular Executive Committee convenes in April 2011, this constitution will become the legal and guiding document of The Society with this Article (Article 24) eliminated from the constitution.