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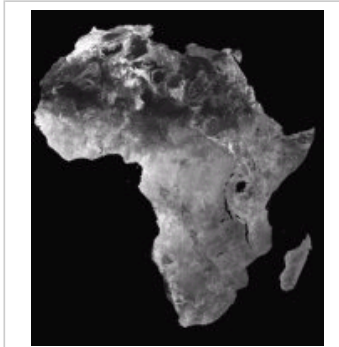
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Africa launches continent-wide physics society

Jan 12, 2010

Physicists in Africa have today launched a cross-continent society to support and represent physicists in the region. At a ceremony held in Dakar, Senegal, researchers from across Africa came together to celebrate the launch of the African Physical Society (AfPS) which is expected to have around 1000 individual members.



AfPS aims to unite African physicists

The AfPS will support the work of existing physical societies in Africa, such as the South African Institute of Physics, as well as helping physicists who are working or studying in an African country that does not have its own society. The AfPS will also help to bring together physicists in different countries in Africa to collaborate with each other.

Boosting training and research

Francis Allotey, a condensed-matter physicist from Ghana who is interim president of the AfPS, also hopes that the new society will spur more countries in Africa to set-up their own physical society. "As an advocate for physics across the continent, the AfPS will endeavour to increase the resource for physics training and research in Africa and the economic and social development [of the continent]," Allotey told *physicsworld.com*.

One of the reasons for setting up a continent-wide society, Allotey points out, is that no African country ranks in the top 20 as measured by the average number of citations that papers from Africa get. Yet each country that is in the top 20 has national and regional structures for supporting physics and astronomy.



Square Kilometre Array

The AfPS has also launched a society for students called the African Association of Physics Students (AAPS). All student members of the AfPS will immediately become members of the AAPS, which will help to establish relations between physics students from Africa and

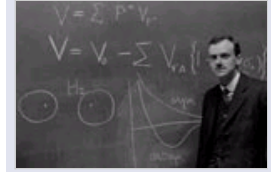
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Lobbying for new projects

The AfPS will also play a lobbying and support role for new projects that could be hosted in Africa. The AfPS, for example, has already endorsed the \$1.5 bn Square Kilometre Array to be built in South Africa. This is a set of radio antennas arranged over a square kilometre that will be 50 times more sensitive than any other radio telescope.

The AfPS replaces the Society of African Physicists and Mathematicians (SAPAM), which was founded in 1984. National physics societies across the continent will also be members of the AfPS just as countries in Europe are members of the European Physical Society.

The meeting in Dakar this week also lays the groundwork for establishing the African Astronomical Society (AAS) and the Optics and Photonics Society of Africa and a full-term president will be elected during the launch meeting.

About the author

Michael Banks is news editor of *Physics World*

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