



SKA Organisation

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Notes from the Chair of the SKA Board

31st Meeting of the Board of Directors of SKA Organisation held at AC Hotel in Nice, France. 19-20 November 2019

Dr Catherine Cesarsky, Chair of the Board, welcomed directors and invited guests to the 31st Meeting of the Board of Directors of SKA Organisation. There was Board representation from Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Invited guests included EPFL and SERI (Switzerland), NAOJ (Japan), NRC (Canada) and the European Commission.

A ballot was held at the beginning of the meeting and the Board re-elected Dr Catherine Cesarsky as Chair of the Board of Directors and Mr Colin Greenwood as Company Secretary.

Engineering

Dr Joseph McMullin, Programme Director and Deputy Director-General, presented an update on Construction Planning. He stated that the Construction Proposal will provide a summary of the scope, budget and schedule for the SKA-1 Deployment Baseline, together with the management processes necessary to achieve it.

Dr McMullin also provided an update on the SKA-1 cost, schedule and risk. The start of construction (T0) is planned for January 2021, with the end of construction scheduled for September 2028, including schedule contingency. He noted that the critical path in the construction schedule has been reduced in duration by approximately one year since the last Board meeting (July 2019).

The Board's role in the review of key documents, including the SKA1 Construction Proposal, the SKA-1 Operations Plan, and the SKA Business-Enabling Plan was discussed. The Board will sign-off on these documents and transmit them to the future SKA Observatory Council. Advanced drafts of these documents will be submitted to the Board at SKA-BD-32 (May 2020).

Operations

Dr Lewis Ball, Director of Operations, and Antonio Chrysostomou, Head of Science Operations Planning, presented the Operations Plan (Revision 2). Key updates in this document were incorporation of the new budget structure and updates of role descriptions, staffing and budget estimates. The Board felt that significant progress had been made in the development of the Operations Plan since the last Board meeting (July 2019). An external review of the Operations Plan (Revision 3) is scheduled for 23 March 2020.

Updates were provided to the Board by directors representing the Australian and South African SKA sites, both included discussion on the social impact of the SKA Precursors and SKA-1 on the surrounding communities.

Prof. Peter Quinn, Chair of the SKA Regional Centres Steering Committee (SRCSC), provided an update on the activities of the Committee. He noted that a key objective of the SRCSC is to build consensus between the SKA project, SRCs and the user community. An SRC White Paper will be submitted to the Board at SKA-BD-32 (May 2020).



Science

Prof. Robert Braun, Director of Science, reported on the activities of the Science Team since the last Board meeting in July. He noted the growth of the Science Working Groups, currently at 900 members in 40 different countries.

Prof. Braun also shared plans regarding the next Science meeting in September 2020 at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. The venue selected will allow up to 350 participants to attend this event, entitled 'The Precursor View of the SKA Sky', which will highlight the scientific productivity of the SKA Pre-cursor telescopes.

The Board was informed about future potential SKA Data Challenges. These may include Science Data Processor Challenges, SKA Regional Centre Challenges and Science/Key Science Project Challenges. Further information can be found on the SKA Website [here](#).

Policy

Ms Patricia Kelly, Chair of the Council Preparatory Task Force, (CPTF) provided an update on the CPTF's activities since the last Board meeting (July 2019). The Board was informed that the CPTF has agreed the text of the SKA Observatory Tier 2 policies on IP, Procurement, Access and Operations; the Board endorsed these documents.

Dr Simon Berry, Director of Strategy, presented an update on progress to develop a partnership model to deliver the operations of SKA-Mid in South Africa and SKA-Low in Australia. It is expected that, initially, Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) will be signed between the SKA Observatory and the operating partner in each host country. These MoUs, which may also cover participation of the host countries in construction activities, will be submitted to the Board for endorsement at SKA-BD-32 (May 2020). In the longer term, two legally binding bilateral agreements will be established between the SKA Observatory and the operating partners to cover collaboration on the day-to-day operations at each telescope.

Ms Theresa Devaney, Head of Business Development and Change, presented an update on the current status of transition planning activities. The Board endorsed the text of an MoU that will govern the relationship between the SKA Board, the CPTF and the SKA Observatory Council during the transition period.

Administration and Governance

Prof. Philip Diamond, Director-General, reported on project Health, Safety and Environmental (HSE) matters as part of his project update.

The Board approved the proposed Corporate Objectives for 2020, which included an over-arching objective for SKA Organisation to deliver, in collaboration with other stakeholders, the design for an instrument, SKA1, with transformational capability in radio astronomy within an agreed cost and schedule. Specifically, it is expected that the Construction Proposal, Operations Plan and Business-Enabling Plan will be signed-off by the Board in July if possible, otherwise in September 2020.

Ms Fiona Davenport, Head of Human Resources (HR), presented an update on implementation of the current HR plan, including four focus areas: Growth & Transition, HR Excellence, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement and HR Administration. The SKA Headquarters continues



to grow rapidly; since the last Board meeting in July, 15 roles have been recruited and 14 roles are currently in the recruitment process or due to be advertised during December

The Board received reports from Prof. Andrea Ferrara and Mr David Luchetti, chairs of the Science and Engineering Committee (SEAC) and Finance Committee respectively. It approved the re-appointment of Mr Luchetti as Chair of the Finance Committee for a further one-year term and the continuing appointment of Mr Bishen Singh as its Vice-Chair.

The next meeting of the Board will be an interim meeting in February 2020, on a date yet to be confirmed, at SKA HQ. Further Board meetings in 2020 are planned in May, July and December. If required, during this crucial period for the project, the Board will also meet in September.

Catherine Cesarsky
Chair, SKA Board of Directors
27 November 2019