



SKA Organisation

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Notes from the Chair of the SKA Board

35th Meeting of the Board of Directors of SKA Organisation held by Video-Conference on 7 December 2020

Dr Catherine Cesarsky, Chair of the Board, welcomed directors and invited guests to the 35th Meeting of the Board of Directors of SKA Organisation. There was Board representation from Australia, Canada, China, India, Italy, The Netherlands, South Africa, Sweden, France, Germany, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. She welcomed Prof. Marco Tavani, President of the National Institute for Astrophysics (INAF), who was newly appointed to the Board as a Voting Representative (Director) for Italy.

Invited guests included representatives from the Council Preparatory Task Force (CPTF), Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources (Australia), Department of Science and Innovation (South Africa), European Commission, Institute of Astrophysics of Andalusia (Spain), Korea Astronomy and Space Science Institute, Max Planck Society, National Astronomical Observatory of Japan, National Institute for Astrophysics (Italy), Science and Technology Facilities Council (UK), SKA Finance Committee, SKA China Office, SKA HQ, State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (Switzerland).

The Board noted that this meeting marks the end of New Zealand participation in the activities of the SKA Organisation. The NZ team, ably led by Dr Andrew Ensor at AUT, and supported by MBIE, brought essential skills and expert capabilities to the SKA, and their unwavering enthusiasm for the project will be missed.

Administration and Governance

Prof. Philip Diamond, Director-General, provided a progress report, this included an update on the impact of COVID-19 on activities at SKA HQ. The HQ re-opened on 7 December following closure owing to a four-week national lockdown in the UK; staff are now able to work safely in the office on a voluntary basis by following the rules and procedures in place. He commented on successful COVID-19 audits of the SKA HQ conducted externally by the British Safety Council and internally by the SKA legal team. Work continues on updates to both the COVID-19 exposure prevention plan and the SKA Wellbeing strategy to ensure all staff remain fully supported going forward into 2021.

Prof. Diamond also provided an update on the Spectrum Management Strategy, the primary goal of which is to put in place mitigation measures to minimise the impact of sources of radio frequency interference across the full range of the electromagnetic spectrum in which the SKA will operate. The SKA Office has recently participated in meetings with the UK and European telecommunications administrations, and with the International Telecommunication Union Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R). It has also commenced technical discussions with satellite service providers in order to identify ways to mitigate the impact of satellite megaconstellations on the SKA whilst retaining the ability to meet the needs of the service providers' customers in the telescope host countries.

Ms Fiona Davenport, Head of HR, spoke about recent recruitment within SKA Organisation. She reported that 32 roles have been recruited to date in 2020, with 18 individuals having taken up post remotely due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Tri-partite meetings are taking place between the



SKA Office, CSIRO in Australia and SARAO in South Africa to support recruitment for the SKA in the UK and the telescope host countries.

Ms Davenport provided an update on HR policy development for the SKA Observatory; the CPTF endorsed the HR policies at its meeting on 22-23 September 2020 and work has now commenced on the development of detailed guidelines to assist the implementation of the policies. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Working Group continues to develop an action plan to embed EDI into SKA Organisation and recently hosted a successful accessibility workshop alongside the European Space Agency (ESA), European Southern Observatory (ESO) and International Astronomical Union (IAU).

The Board approved the appointment of David Luchetti as Chair of the Finance Committee for a further one-year term and the continuing appointment of Bishen Singh as its Vice-Chair.

Finance

The Board received a report from Mr David Luchetti, Chair of the Finance Committee, on the outcomes of the 19th Finance Committee meeting held on 21 October 2020. This included the Budget for 2021, the final external audit findings report by RSM UK Audit LLP and a review of the SKA Organisation's Finance Policies.

The Board approved the proposed Budget for 2021 in accordance with the Finance Committee's recommendation. It also approved changes to the Finance Committee's Rules of Procedure to ensure this body remains effective for the period when SKA Organisation operates in parallel with the SKA Observatory.

Programme

Dr Joseph McMullin, Programme Director and Deputy Director-General, presented an update on the engineering programme. The SKA Observatory's document set, comprising the Construction Proposal, the Observatory Establishment and Delivery Plan, and the SKA Prospectus, which was endorsed by the Board at its last meeting, has now also been endorsed by the CPTF. The document set will be submitted to the SKA Observatory Council for approval next year. Meantime, much work is underway to ensure readiness for start of construction (T0).

Dr McMullin reviewed the roadmap for the period from submission of the Construction Proposal to awarding of contracts, including progress in relation to preparations for procurement and the procurement schedule. An internal readiness review is planned for January 2021, which will involve an in-depth review of the preparations for procurement in order that T0 can take place in July 2021, assuming SKA Observatory Council approval.

Operations

Dr Antonio Chrysostomou, Head of Science Operations, presented an update on operations planning since the last Board meeting. He stated that draft Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between SKA Organisation and CSIRO (Australia), and SARAO (South Africa), have now been completed. These MoUs, for SKA operations in the telescope host countries, will ensure a common understanding on construction, operations and business-enabling activities, including staffing profiles, at the telescope sites.

Dr Chrysostomou provided information on the planning for the host country facilities in South Africa and Australia, sharing progress on the power procurement for each site. He also provided an update on planning for the SKA Regional Centres (SRC) Network; SRC Working Groups have now been established and are focusing on the development of work packages and future roadmaps.



The Board were alerted to current vacancies advertised on the SKA Organisation's [Recruitment Portal](#) for SKA Telescope Director (Australia), SKA Telescope Director (South Africa), and SRC Architect.

Policy

Ms Patricia Kelly, Chair of the CPTF, shared an update from the two meetings of the CPTF that have taken place since the last SKA Board meeting. Ms Kelly reviewed the current schedule for ratification by signatories of the SKA Observatory Convention; it is expected that the on-going ratification processes will be completed in time for the first Council meeting to take place in January 2021.

Ms Theresa Devaney, Head of Business Development and Change, presented an update on the current status of transition planning activities, which continue in line with the governance timetable. The Board noted the progress of the transition to the SKA Observatory, including the key risks, key governance meetings schedule and planning assumption regarding the date for the transition. The proposed plans for the future closure of the company were shared. Following the first meeting of the SKA Observatory Council, staff and other assets will be transferred from SKA Organisation to the SKA Observatory as soon as is practicable.

The Board approved the text of an MoU which defines governance arrangements and responsibilities during the period when both SKA Organisation and SKA Observatory will co-exist as legal entities.

Ms Fiona Davenport, Head of HR, presented information regarding the SKA Observatory's Reward and Benefits approach, which will be critical for the attraction and retention of the diverse talent needed in an international context. A benefits proposition has been developed for inclusion in a Reward and Benefits Policy, which will be submitted to the CPTF for endorsement at its next meeting. In addition, considerable work has already been undertaken to develop a draft Career and Pay Framework.

Ms Davenport informed the Board about the forthcoming staff consultation process, as required under TUPE, the UK's Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations, 2006. An Employee Representative Board is currently being set up so that formal consultation with elected staff representatives can take place in advance of the transfer of staff to the SKA Observatory.

Future Board Meetings

The next meeting of the SKA Board (SKA-BD-36) will be held by video-conference early next year, at a date to be confirmed.

Catherine Cesarsky
Chair, SKA Board of Directors
14 December 2020