

Executive Summary of the 98th Meeting of the IAU Executive Committee

The 98th Executive Committee Meeting of the IAU took place between 4 and 6 May 2016 in Mexico City. It was hosted by the UNAM (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) and was also attended by the Division Presidents. We present here an executive summary of the main items discussed and the decisions taken.



IAU EC Members and Division Presidents at the EC98 Meeting in Mexico City

Junior Astronomers

In order to increase the involvement of young astronomers in the activities of the Union, it has been proposed that we create the new category of “Junior Member” that would allow astronomy PhD students and starting postdocs to be admitted as Junior Members (JM) for an initial period of 3 years. Membership would be renewable once, after which, upon the recommendation of their National Committee on Astronomy, they will either become normal Members or will leave the Union. The relevant modifications of the Statutes and Bye-laws will be distributed and discussed with the National Members well in advance of the XXX GA, so that the admission of JMs could commence in Vienna in 2018.

Additional measures to involve young astronomers and to improve the gender balance in the IAU were proposed and are being further developed and implemented.

Working Groups

The category of “Functional Working Group” has been introduced. These are WGs whose scope and purpose are institutional and naturally extend beyond the IAU three-year cycle. At the EC98 the following Functional WGs were identified:

Division A

“Numerical Standards in Fundamental Astronomy” (NSFR)

“Standards of Fundamental Astronomy” (SOFA)

“Cartographic Coordinates and Rotational Elements” (CC&RE – with Division F)

“Time Metrology Standards” (TMS)

Divisions B-E

“Coordination of Synoptic Observations of the Sun” (Inter-Division WG)

Division C-E

“Solar Eclipses” (Inter-Division WG)

Division D

“Supernovae”

Division F

“Planetary System Nomenclature” (WGPSN)

“Small Bodies Nomenclature” (SBN)

Division H

“Galactic Centre”

Requirements and guidelines for proposing additional Functional WGs are being prepared.

Two new EC Working Groups have been approved:

- “Global Coordination of Ground and Space Astrophysics”, proposed by D. Elmegreen and E. van Dishoeck. This is a spin-off of the Focus Meeting 11 held in Honolulu. The Kavli Foundation expressed interest in sponsoring the activity of such a WG.
- “Dark and Quiet Sky Protection”, proposed by R. Green and C. Walker. This is a continuation/transformation of the WG on the International Year of Light 2015 (IYL2015) and it focuses on the protection of the sky for astronomical observations at all wavelengths. It includes the possibility of collaborating with the IAU-UNESCO initiative of World Heritage astronomical sites.

IAU Symposia 2017 and XXIX General Assembly

The 9 IAU Symposia approved for 2017 are

- IAUS 331 SN1987A, 30 years later
- IAUS 332 Astrochemistry VII — Through the Cosmos from Galaxies to Planets
- IAUS 333 Peering towards Cosmic Dawn
- IAUS 334 Rediscovering our Galaxy
- IAUS 335 Space Weather of the Heliosphere: Processes and Forecasts
- IAUS 336 Astrophysical Masers: Unlocking the Mysteries of the Universe
- IAUS 337 Pulsar Astrophysics: The next 50 years

- IAUS 338 Gravitational Wave Astrophysics: Early Results from GW Searches and Electromagnetic Counterparts
- IAUS 339 Southern Horizons in Time-Domain Astronomy

(see <http://www.iau.org/news/announcements/detail/ann16023/>).

The rescheduling of IAUS330 “Astronomy and Astrophysics in the GAIA Sky” from 2016 to April 2017 was approved.

Unfortunately, the Symposium IAUS326 “Research in Astronomy Education: Far Reaching Impacts and Future Directions” planned to be held in Heidelberg between 4 and 7 October 2016, had to be cancelled because of a shortage of local financial support and because of the resignation of the Local Organizing Committee. An international conference entitled “Education Research in Astronomy and Astrobiology: theory, methods, impact and future directions”, that shares some of the objectives of the original IUAS326, is being planned for 3-8 July in Utrecht (NL). The Executive Committee agreed to co-sponsor the Conference by contributing a travel grant of 10 000 €.

The report by the AAS on the XXIX GA was carefully analysed and important lessons were learned that can help improve the scientific programme and the overall organization of future GAs, starting in 2018 with the XXX GA in Vienna. In particular, various ideas aimed at improving the visibility and effectiveness of the poster sessions at the General Assembly were discussed and approved. The relevant modifications to the guidelines for submitting proposals for Symposia and Focus Meetings will be published on the IAU webpages. A standard website template for IAU Symposia has been prepared by the ESO team and will be offered to the organisers of future Symposia and General Assemblies.

The Chair of the XXX GA LOC, Gerhard Hensel, presented the status of the preparatory activities in Vienna.

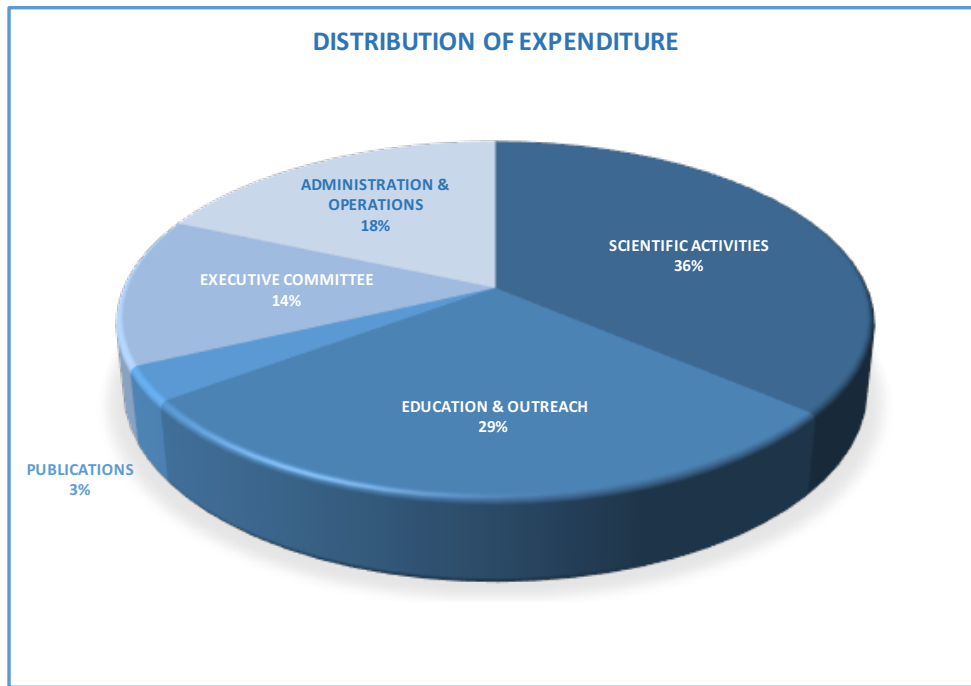
Financial Report

The annual auditing of the IAU Accounts has been restored and the Financial Report for 2015 has been approved.

In 2015, 54 National Members out of a total of 67 (6 NMs are suspended) paid their dues and several of them also paid, fully or in part, their arrears. The total amount received was **936 838 €**. The total income of IAU in 2015, including the NM dues, the Cambridge University Press royalties and additional minor entries, amounted to **1 173 821 €**.

The expenditure in 2015 was **1 416 475 €** leading to a net loss of **-242 654 €**.

The assets of the IAU at the end of the 2015 Financial exercise (31 December 2015) were **1 486 693 €**. The expenditure in 2015 was distributed among different categories as followings:



Collaboration with UNESCO

The collaboration with UNESCO on World Heritage was reviewed: although several excellent candidate historical astronomical sites are being proposed for UNESCO World Heritage status, the competition with other historical monuments, even within the same country, is very high. While continuing this activity, it was proposed that we institute an independent IAU recognition of “Astronomical World Heritage” to be assigned to those observatories or institutes that have played an important role in the history of Astronomy.

IAU Centenary Celebrations

Several proposals for ways to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the IAU (1919-2019) were discussed. In particular, the draft content of a book about the IAU as well as the idea of an IAU Brochure to be presented at the XXXth General Assembly in Vienna were evaluated. The National Members will be invited to plan various celebration activities in their respective Countries, in particular in education and outreach.

IAU Strategic Plan

The procedure for reviewing the IAU Strategic Plan (see link below) that is due for approval by the XXXth General Assembly in Vienna, was discussed. An ad hoc Working Group, chaired by President Elect Ewine van Dishoek, was appointed.

The IAU Strategic Plan can be found at http://www.iau.org/static/education/strategicplan_2010-2020.pdf