

Resolutions of the 9th Meeting of the 2023 BRICS Astronomy Working Group 19 October 2023

The 2023 BRICS Astronomy Working Group (BAWG) meeting was hosted by the Inter-University Institute for Data Intensive Astronomy (IDIA) at the South African Astronomical Observatory, Cape Town, South Africa, with the support of the BRICS Astronomy Secretariat at the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI). Distinguished representatives from the governments and scientific institutions of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, as well as several astronomers and students from these countries, attended the BRICS Astronomy Workshop on 16 -17 October, this was followed by a two-day hackathon which was attended by students from the BRICS countries. On the third day, delegates from BRICS member countries embarked on a site visit to the MeerKAT/SKA and the SALT facilities in the Karoo. The week concluded with the BAWG business meeting on 19 October where the delegates deliberated on strategic and operational matters. The following resolutions were taken:

1. The meeting started with progress update on work done on the previous resolutions of the 8th Annual Meeting. One of the main points raised was on the establishment of the BRICS Astronomy Association/Society. A decision was made to put this on hold for now and will be reviewed as the need arises in the future once a critical mass of BRICS astronomy collaborations has been reached.
2. It was resolved that the BRICS members should investigate opportunities for participating either as a bloc or in a collaborative manner in large international astronomy facilities. Immediate opportunities to be explored are the Rubin Observatory and the Cherenkov Telescope Array (CTA).
3. The BAWG agreed to expand its focus and mandate beyond astronomy science to include collaboration in instrumentation and technologies for astronomy. As an immediate step, a directory of companies and agencies providing services and technologies for the astronomy sector should be compiled to assist in facilitating opportunities and tendering by companies within the BRICS countries. The directory should include a reference contact point in each of the partner countries.
4. The BAWG noted the feedback on the BRICS STI Framework and Flagship programmes from the BRICS STI Secretariat (Yaroslav Sorokotyaga). The committee raised issues related to the delays in the BRICS STI Calls adjudicating and funding release to the partners which results in significant synchronisation challenges for implementation.
5. With respect to funding for the BRICS Intelligent Telescope and Data Network (BITDN) flagship project, the committee made a recommendation to member countries to engage their respective funding agencies as well the BRICS Infrastructure Working Group (GRAIN) on funding opportunities and to send feedback to the Secretariat by April 2024. Furthermore, the BAWG encouraged the community to continue maturing the BITDN project, including submitting it to the proposed BRICS STI Flagship Call as well as exploring other opportunities to advance the vision.
6. BAWG strongly advocated for the consolidation of efforts to explore alternative open-access and free to publish peer-reviewed astronomy research given the prohibitive costs

of publishing introduced by recent developments in scientific journals. The committee recognizes existing discussions within countries and within regional bodies like the African Astronomical Society. South Africa volunteered to coordinate the process of developing proposals for consideration on this issue at the next BAWG meeting.

7. BAWG raised the matter of translating the BRICS Astronomy magazine. Each individual country will explore ways of translating the magazine into their own native languages. Report back is requested by the end of June 2024. The current editorial team will consult with the countries on the existing content material as well as broadening the editorial committee.
8. The BAWG thanked South Africa for successfully hosting the 2023 meeting. Russia will host the next BAWG meeting in 2024 in line with the rotation of the BRICS Presidency. The Secretariat will engage with Russia and will communicate the proposed venue and dates in due course.



Signed by the Secretariat of the BRICS Astronomy Working Group
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