

IAU OFFICE OF ASTRONOMY FOR DEVELOPMENT: ACHIEVEMENTS OF ITS FIRST YEAR AND THE WAY FORWARD

The IAU Office of Astronomy for Development (OAD) is organising a Special Session (SpS11) at the General Assembly (GA) on 27-28 August. This is the first GA to take place since the OAD was launched in April 2011 and offers an opportunity to learn about the latest developments in implementing the IAU's Strategic Plan 2010-20, Astronomy for Development.

The OAD's two-strong team is based in Cape Town, South Africa, and supported by a global network of volunteers. "The OAD will act as a central point of contact for the volunteers, offering strategic advice and coordinating resources so that they can be used to maximum effect," says Kevin Govender, Director of the OAD. More than 400 astronomers have already registered as volunteers on the OAD website (www.astro4dev.org), about half of whom are IAU members.

To date, the bulk of the OAD's work has focussed on setting up its organisational structure. A major milestone took place in May 2012, when the OAD established its three 'Task Forces' - committees of experts in various fields from around the world that will

help to drive its mission. These Task Forces are 'Astronomy for Universities and Research', 'Astronomy for Children and Schools' and 'Astronomy for the Public'. During SpS11, members from each Task Force will give further details about their role and inform delegates about a new open call for proposals to access funding for development projects.

The next step is the announcement of the OAD's Regional Nodes, which are being set up to ensure local input from each continent into strategic planning.

On Tuesday 21 August 2012, the IAU signed an agreement at the GA with a consortium of Chinese institutes to establish the Regional Node for East Asia. This is the first Regional Node to be announced so far. The main institutes involved in the consortium are the Kavli Institute for Astronomy and Astrophysics (KIAA, Peking University), Beijing Planetarium and Yunnan Astronomical Observatory. Various partner organisations will support the consortium, including the National Astronomical Observatories of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (NAOC), the East Asian Core Observatories Association



The agreement to establish the OAD Regional Node for East Asia was signed at the IAU General Assembly.

(EACOA), and Pyongyang Astronomical Observatory (PAO).

Aside from the internal organisation, there are many OAD pilot projects that are already underway. For example, a workshop was held in April 2012 in Cape Town about using Microsoft's WorldWide Telescope (WWT) in the classroom, and science 'hack days' have taken place, in which coders developed new tools for the OAD during programming marathons.

The OAD is also working in collaboration with the Royal Astronomical Society and the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research to organise visiting expert programmes for developing countries. The first of the expert

visits will take place in September 2012, with a UK-based astronomer visiting Sierra Leone. There will also be a suite of collaborations with the International Centre for Theoretical Physics, which will be launched during the GA.

Furthermore, the OAD is developing a 'match-making' website, called astro global, which will display the location of its volunteers on a map that can be filtered by various categories, such as areas of expertise and languages spoken. "There are many astronomers who are eager to contribute to development projects, both at home and when they are travelling. This website will help to match volunteers to the most suitable projects more efficiently, and also acts as a networking tool for astronomers," says Govender. The website is not public yet, but GA delegates can view its progress by visiting the OAD booth in the exhibition area. This booth will also be used as a central point of coordination for the Young Astronomers Lunch event and the Young Astronomers Consulting Service. ■

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TRAVEL TIPS

■ Taking the taxi

Although the subway is probably your preferred mode of transport, the taxi is also a convenient way to get around. Since most taxi drivers do not speak English, think about how you will explain where you want to go. Make sure to take the hotel's card (and a map) that lists the hotel's address in Chinese. This is very useful if you get lost and need to get back via taxi. A regular city map with streets and sights in Chinese will also help. As elsewhere in the world it is really hard to find a taxi during rush hour or when it rains.

■ Taxi pricing

The taxi fare is displayed on the meter, and consists of a ¥10 starting fee, plus ¥2/km after the first 3 km. A trip to the airport will cost you roughly ¥100 from the conference area or from the Beijing University area. At the end of your trip, ask for the receipt by pointing at the meter. You can use this receipt to trace back the driver, in case you accidentally left something in the taxi.

All taxis have license plates beginning with "京 B", and are recognizable as taxis. Illegal taxis have different license plates; they are normal cars with a small red light, and should be avoided. The vast majority of the taxi drivers is honest, but if the taxi driver "forgets" to switch the taxi meter on, remind him by politely by pointing at the meter box. If you have any sort of trouble, write down the taxi's registration number (or take a photo), which can be found on the plaque in front of the passengers seat.

DAY 4: PROGRAM SUMMARY

"YOUNG ASTRONOMERS' LUNCH" BANQUET

PLENARY TALKS (8:30-10:00):

- "Pulsars are cool - seriously" by Scott Ransom
- "Magnetars: neutron stars with magnetic storms" by Nanda Rea
- "Probing gravitation with pulsars" by Michael Kramer

IAUS 288	Sub-mm observations & stations
IAUS 290	Time variability & Large scale properties
IAUS 291	Pulsar timing & Pulsars and ISM & Distribution and evolution
IAUS 292	ISM diagnostics & Dust
SpS 1	Extragalactic and nuclear star clusters & Dwarf galaxies
SpS 2	Ellipticals and galaxy groups & Non-thermal cluster properties & Environmental impact
SpS 3	Radial mixing & Morphology & Environmental effects
SpS 4	Intracluster medium & Cosmic web and early universe
SpS 5 "The IR view of massive stars: the main sequence and beyond"	Obscured and distant stellar clusters & Stellar parameters and wind parameters
SpS 6	Key scientific questions & Existing and planned facilities

JD5 continues. JD6 "The connection between radio properties and high-energy emission in AGNs" starts.