

# Working Document

## SAPhysNet Constitution WG1 Working Document

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### Instructions

This is a draft working document.

**Please insert suggested text under each relevant section feel free to rename headings or add other subheadings**

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## 1 Preamble

The Southern Africa Physics Network (SAPhysNet) was established to address the pressing need for regional collaboration in physics research, education, and innovation. Physics plays a crucial role in solving common regional development challenges, including energy access, water management, healthcare, and food security. These issues require collective scientific efforts and technological advancements that no single country can tackle alone. The need for Southern African nations to cooperate in applying physics-based solutions to these challenges is more urgent than ever. Despite significant progress in various institutions, the absence of a structured network has hindered resource-sharing, policy advocacy, and international engagement. SAPhysNet seeks to bridge these gaps by fostering regional cooperation, enhancing research capabilities, and integrating physics into socioeconomic development strategies.

Recognising this need, a **meeting was held on 5 July 2024**, where stakeholders from across Southern Africa convened to discuss the formation of a dedicated physics network. The meeting resulted in a resolution to establish a **task team** responsible for

structuring the network, defining its objectives, and ensuring alignment with regional and international scientific goals.

SAPhysNet is committed to supporting key regional and global policies, including the **African Union's Agenda 2063**, which prioritises science, technology, and innovation as drivers of sustainable development. Additionally, the network aligns with national science and education policies to strengthen physics education, research, and industry linkages within the region.

International cooperation is a core pillar of SAPhysNet. By actively engaging with global physics organisations, particularly the **International Union of Pure and Applied Physics (IUPAP)**, the network aims to facilitate collaboration, access funding opportunities, and integrate Southern African physics research into the global scientific landscape. Strengthening ties with international partners will enable knowledge exchange, capacity-building, and greater participation in global scientific initiatives.

The establishment of SAPhysNet marks a strategic move towards reinforcing physics as a vital discipline for regional development. Through collaboration, policy support, and international engagement, the network aspires to drive scientific excellence and innovation across Southern Africa.

## 2 Establishment

### 2.1 Name of Entity

- a) The name of the organisation shall be the "**Southern Africa Physics Network**" or its equivalent translation in any of the official languages of Southern Africa. Hereafter, it shall be referred to as the "**Network**" or "**Society**".
- b) The official abbreviation of the Network/Society shall be **SAPhysNet**.

### 2.2 Legal Status and Nature of the Network/Society

- a) The **Southern Africa Physics Network (SAPhysNet)** is a voluntary, not-for-profit, and public benefit association dedicated to advancing physics and its benefits in Southern Africa.
- b) The Network/Society is a separate legal entity from its members.
- c) It shall be registered as a voluntary, not-for-profit, and public benefit organisation.
- d) No profits or income shall accrue to or be distributed among its members or office bearers.
- e) The assets and liabilities of the Network/Society shall be independent of those of its members.

- f) Members and office bearers shall have no ownership rights over the assets of the Network/Society.
- g) Members and office bearers shall not be personally liable for the obligations or debts of the Network/Society.
- h) The Network/Society shall continue to exist despite any changes in its membership.
- i) The Network/Society may conduct its procedures and operations remotely as necessary.

## 3 Goals

### 3.1 Vision

SAPhysNet envision Africa inspired and developed by physics research and physics development projects

### 3.2 Mission

Advances physics in the Southern Africa region by promoting research collaboration a  research.

### 3.3 Objectives & Activities

- a) To establish a platform for a network of individuals, institutions and companies operating in the world of scientific research, both basic and applied;
- b) To promote contacts among physicists in the  region and between them and the world scientific community;
- c) To promote regional agreements on research and teaching, fostering research infrastructure sharing, research and academic personal exchange.
- d) To undertake actions in order to raise the impact of research on physics in  as well as promoting, and partnering in, installation and hosting of international physics-related research initiatives.
- e) To organize seminars and conferences, conventions and other events, at the regional level, which aim at stimulating the scientific growth of its members.
- f) The income of this network may derive from membership fees, sponsorship and donations with no compromises to ideological and political neutrality.

## 4 Values/Philosophy

The activities of the Southern Africa Physics Network (SAPhysNet) shall be guided by the following values:

- a) Excellence – SAPhysNet shall strive for world-class excellence in physics research, education, and applications.
- b) Transparency – The Network shall conduct its affairs in an open, honest, and transparent manner.
- c) Accountability – SAPhysNet shall be accountable to its members, stakeholders, and the broader scientific community.
- d) Responsiveness – The Network shall adapt to emerging scientific and developmental challenges, ensuring relevance and impact.
- e) Relevance – SAPhysNet shall align its activities with the scientific and developmental needs of Southern Africa and the continent.
- f) Participation and Inclusivity – The Network shall encourage active participation of members, foster inclusivity, and engage with other organisations and the public to advance its goals.
- g) Service Orientation – Leadership within SAPhysNet shall prioritise serving the physics community rather than personal status or recognition.
- h) Ethical Integrity – The Network shall uphold the highest standards of professional ethics, integrity, and scientific responsibility.
- i) Collaboration over Competition – SAPhysNet shall recognise and respect the contributions of others, fostering cooperation rather than unnecessary competition.
- j) Academic Freedom – The Network shall respect and promote intellectual freedom, academic inquiry, and freedom of expression.
- k) Diversity, Inclusion, and Non-Discrimination – SAPhysNet shall actively promote diversity, inclusion, and non-discrimination within its activities, ensuring equal opportunities for all.
- l) Ubuntu - the way Africans do things (expand later) In SAPhysNet, we recognise the humanity in each other, and act with respect, helpfulness, sharing, community, caring, trust, and unselfishness to enable the community around us to be able to improve.

## 5 Membership Types

Members are all those who fully share the same vision and objectives, the institutional purposes and activities of the Network.

Besides the founding members, members are all those who have submitted written application, accepted by the Council/Board of Directors, stating:

- a) the willingness to participate in the association activities;
- b) the full acceptance, without any reservation, of the Statute and the ethical principles contained therein;
- c) the acceptance of the activities, purposes, and methods of the Association.

All members have equal voting rights, in order to ensure the democratic nature of the Network and to enable all members, without distinction, to approve and change the Network's acts and to appoint the management officers. 

### 5.1 Categories

Individuals eligible as members are: undergraduates and master students, graduates (who want to work in the world of scientific and / or industrial research), PhD students, postdoctoral fellows and young researchers, both resident in **SADC** and abroad.

Members can also be: researchers in different Physics disciplines, professors, physics/science communicators and physics/science journalists, professionals working in the sector of technological development.

Honorary membership can be granted to individuals who have distinguished themselves for their work in the scientific/Physics community (Nobel prizes or worldwide renowned scientists, leaders in their research field).

Even national Physics Institutes or their affiliates, laboratories, institutes (Universities, Colleges etc.), and public or private research institutions, represented by their legal representatives or directors, may join the Network as partners with the right to a single vote.

The Network is composed of founder members, ordinary members, supporting members and honorary members:

The founding members are the members who, by participating in the General Assembly, have approved the establishment of the Network;

Ordinary members are those who adhere to the Network upon presentation of appropriate written request, according to the terms and conditions contained in this Statute. Ordinary members carry out continuously the Network's institutional activities;

The supporting members are individuals, legal persons, associations or institutions which, while not directly engaged in the Network's activities, support the Network with appropriate

contributions and pursue similar objectives, maintaining a constant participation in Network activities;

Honorary members are those who are appointed by the Council/Board of Directors on the basis of particular merit and worthy activities in which they have distinguished themselves.

National membership is open to **SADC** countries to be members through a national committee **as** supported by the government of that country. National Membership may be bestowed by the Network upon the establishment of that country's national committee, and upon two-thirds vote of the Council/Board of Directors and a majority vote of the General Assembly.

## i) 5.2 Application for Membership

In order to get a membership, it is necessary to submit a written application to the Council/Board of Directors, stating:

- first and last name, date and place of birth, nationality, academic degree or academic qualification, profession and residence;
- express statement of willingness to join the Network;
- unreserved acceptance of the present Statute and the ethical principles contained in it, as well as the activities, vision and objectives of the Network.

Complete applications must be sent to the Council/Board of Directors and must contain the signature of the applicant, otherwise they will not be considered as valid.

The membership will be ratified by the Council/Board of Directors, and then communicated to the applicant. Applications are accepted or rejected by the Council/Board of Directors if, according to its judgment, they are deemed in line or not with the required criteria given in the Statute of the Network.

Decisions of the Council/Board of Directors are to be considered as unquestionable, however applicants may still file a complaint, to be submitted in writing to the General Assembly within 7 (seven) days from the date of the notice of denial.

Upon acceptance of membership, the Network will deliver to the applicant a special badge of membership and, at the same time, will collect the payment of the membership fee. Concurrently, the new member will be included into the Book of Members of the Network.

## ii) 5.3 RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF MEMBERS

**Rights of the members are:**

- a) the right to attend the Members' Meeting and to vote directly for approval and amendments to the Statute, regulations, and for the election of the governing bodies of the Network, as well as for the approval of the annual Financial Statement and the related Report of Mission. Only members who have paid the membership fee are entitled

to vote.

The Founding, Ordinary, Honorary and Supporting Members have all an equal right to vote and may freely candidate themselves for the renewal of the Council/Board of Directors;

- b) the right to use the Networks premises, its facilities and equipment;
- c) the right to participate in the activities promoted by the Network and to benefit by all the proposed services;
- d) the right to freely express their opinion on the Network and the people involved in it;
- e) the right to regularly receive information about the Network.

**Duties of the members are:**

- f) the duty to respect the Statute and the regulations of the Network;
- g) the duty to respect the aims of the Network through a behaviour that conforms to its social and ethical principles;
- h) the duty to comply with the resolutions adopted by the Boards of the Network;
- i) the duty to pay a membership fee before the established deadline, whose amount is established annually by the Council/Board of Directors;
- j) the duty to use appropriately the equipment and the premises provided by the Network;
- k) the commitment to actively participate and contribute in the Network's activities, at the best of one's possibilities, in order to achieve the best possible implementation of the purposes of the Network.

### **iii) 5.4 TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP**

Membership is terminated by resignation of the member or by exclusion ordered by the Council/Board of Directors.

A member who wishes to withdraw from the Network shall send notification by certified e-mail addressed to the Council/Board of Directors, at least one month before the deadline for payment of the membership fee.

The exclusion of a member can always be decided by the Council/Board of Directors for serious reasons, such as:

- a) dishonorable actions damaging the reputation of the Network;
- b) conduct that prevents the good performance of the Network;
- c) arrears in the payment of the membership fee: the member who fails to renew enrollment in the Network for two consecutive years automatically loses his membership;
- d) failure to meet the statutory and regulatory duties.

The membership fee can not be transferred nor revaluated. The member who resigns for any reason will never be reimbursed of the membership fee nor of other amounts of money paid to the Network for participating in the activities.

The exclusion and expulsion from the Network will be decided by the Council/Board of Directors with a vote to which simple majority rules apply. The measure must be always communicated in writing to the member and must be substantiated.

The member excluded may always file an appeal to the General Assembly against the decision of the Council/Board of Directors. The expelled member can, in this case, present his objection against the decision of the Council/Board of Directors in written form, by sending a specific appeal to the General Assembly; the appeal does not suspend the enforceability of the initial expulsion.

## 6 Council / Board of Directors

- a) Council/Board of Directors shall consist of nine (9) members, as follows: President, Vice President/President-Elect, Secretary, Treasurer, four Committee Members and one Student Member 
- b) Only voting members in good standing shall be eligible for service on the Council/Board of Directors.
- c) The President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and 4 Committee members shall be nominated and elected by the voting members of the Institute as members of the Council/Board of Directors.
- d) The Student Member shall be nominated and elected by the Student members of the Network.
- e) Elections of the Council shall take place every three (3) years.
- f) Any vacancy on Council, caused by the death, retirement, resignation or suspension/expulsion/disqualification of any of its members, may be filled by co-option into Council, subject to ratification at a subsequent Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- g) An Executive Committee consisting of the President, President-Elect, Secretary and Treasurer shall deal with urgent matters, incidental to the running of the Network, which may arise between meetings of Council/Board of Directors. The Executive shall report on its actions to the Council/Board of Directors.

### iv) 6.1 POWERS OF THE COUNCIL/BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Council shall have power to:

- (a) administer the affairs of the Institute in accordance with the constitution;
- (b) consider and approve or reject applications for membership of the Network in any of the grades, subject to ratification at a subsequent AGM;
- (c) receive and accept the resignations of members and take resolutions concerning the suspension or expulsion of members, subject to ratification at a subsequent AGM;
- (d) appoint sub-committees from members of the Network to carry out instructions from the Council/Board of Directors;

(e) The Council/Board of Directors shall be the legal trustee of the Network and shall take legal action in the name of the Network

(f) control and administer all funds, property and assets of the Network and incur expenditure on behalf of the Network, which expenditure may include payment of honoraria to the Treasurer and Secretary and travelling expenses to members of the Council/Board of Directors;

The assets of the Network shall be used for the promotion of the objects and aims of the Network in such manner as Council/Board of Directors may determine. The Network shall not:

(i) carry on any trading or other profit-making activities, or participate in any commercial business carried on by any of its members, or provide or make available to any of its members financial assistance, promises, continuous services or facilities for the purpose of carrying on any commercial business;

(ii) distribute any of its profits or gains to any person and shall not utilise its funds other than for investment or for the furtherance of its objects.

(g) enter into any affiliation agreement with another network, institute or society should such a decision be passed at an Annual General Meeting;

## 7 Election of Council / Board

## 8 Meeting Procedures

### v) 8.1 General Meeting Procedures

#### 1) 8.1.1 Quorum

- a) Quorum for all SAPhysNet Committees and Council/Board meetings shall be at least half (50%) of the members
- b) Quorum for General Assemblies shall be one third of voting members.

#### 2) 8.1.2 Voting

Decisions at all SAPhysNet meetings shall be made by a simple majority vote unless otherwise specified in the Constitution.

### 3) 8.1.3 Conflict of Interest

All members are expected to declare any conflicts of interest in all SAPhysNet meetings before a vote takes place.

### 4) 8.1.4 Minutes

Minutes of all meetings will be made available to the members of the Network/Society within a month of the meeting.

## vi) 8.2 General Assembly

The Network/Society shall convene, at least every three years, an ordinary General Assembly made up of all members of the Network/Society.

- a) The agenda of a session of the General Assembly shall be drawn up by the Council/Board and distributed to members at least three (3) months before the opening of the General Assembly.
- b) All attempts will be made to link the time and venue of the General Assembly to other major physics meetings in Southern Africa.
- c) The Council/Board shall determine a process for the call for and selection of hosts of General Assemblies.
- d) All full members of the Society shall be eligible to vote at a General Assembly.
- e) Decisions of the General Assembly shall be by a simple majority vote of Full members present.

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## i) 8.3 Council/Board Meetings

The Council/Board shall meet at least every three months during the financial year, and, if necessary after each meeting, issue a communique to all members on the outcomes of the meeting.

- a) Any member of the Council/Board who does not attend two consecutive meetings without reasons that are acceptable to two-thirds of the rest of the Council/Board, will be discharged of their duties, and their position will remain unfilled until the next General Assembly.
- b) The President, or two members of the Council/Board, can call a special meeting. They must notify other members of the Council/Board of the date of the proposed meeting not less than 25 days before it is due to take place. They must draw up an agenda for the meeting and dis is tribute it to other members of the Council/Board. If, however, one of the matters to be discussed is to appoint a new

Council/Board member, then those calling the meeting must give the other ExCouncil/Board members not less than 30 days' notice.

- c) The President shall act as the chairperson of the Council/Board. In the absence of the President, the Vice-President shall preside over the Council/Board. If both the President and Vice-President do not attend a meeting, then members of the committee who are present choose which one of them will chair that meeting. This must be done before the meeting starts
- d) Minutes of all Council/Board meetings must be kept safely and be issued timeously to all members.

## 9 Financial Management

9.1. Council/Board of directors is empowered to levy, fix and amend entrance fees and/or annual subscriptions, project the financial goals and annual budget for the next fiscal year.

9.2. The financial affairs of the Organization shall be under the control of the council through an indicated/sitting Treasurer.

9.3. All withdrawals from banking accounts shall require signatures of three council members, namely, the President, the Treasurer and a third senior member from the council, specially elected by the general council for this purpose.

9.4. Council is empowered to invest funds at its discretion under the condition that there shall be no more than fifteen percent (15%) of the total funds of the Organization collected or received by all legal means in the last fiscal year.

9.5. Council is entitled, at its discretion, to disburse funds for the following purposes:

9.5.1. To cover expenses incurred by Council members in attending Council meetings or for any other official business of the Association.

9.5.2. Financing of guest speakers

9.5.3. To cover the expenses of official delegates of the Association to regional and international conferences, either in part or in full.

9.5.4. For the establishment of fellowship funds and research grants

9.5.5. For financing research projects in the southern african region with Southern Africa researchers.

9.5.6. Financing researchers, group of researchers or teacher and national groups.

9.5.7. The Organization's accounts shall close as at 31st December of each year and shall be subject to an annual audit by a temporary and annual rotative audit committee..

9.6. The annual rotative committee shall:

9.6.1. consist of at least 4 members, from at least 3 different countries.

9.6.2. be appointed at the Annual General meeting.

9.6.3. a statement of the accounts of the Association for the preceding financial year shall be presented for approval at each annual general meeting and made available to the public by publication on the organisation's official website within 30 days of approval.

9.7. As a regional organization, member's contributions, expenditures and investments should be indexed in the most stable currency of the region and in dollars. The regional currency of choice must be approved by the general council.

## 9.1 Currency

The SAPhysNet shall use the currency of the country in which the secretariat hosted

## 10 Dissolution

Dissolution of the Network/Society may be proposed by the Council/Board or by thirty or more members in good standing at least three months before a General Assembly.

- a) Where a proposal is made by thirty or more members in good standing, such a proposal shall be submitted to the Council/Board in writing.
- b) The proposal shall be communicated to all members at least two months before the General Assembly;
- c) Dissolution shall be decreed by at least four-fifths of the total votes cast, including proxy votes cast, at the General Assembly, providing that such a meeting is quorate and that at least two-thirds of the voting membership has cast their votes.
- d) In the event that the General Assembly cannot be held within six months of the date of distribution of a valid motion to dissolve the Network/Society, a vote shall be conducted by remote means. The support of more than two-thirds of the Voting

membership shall be required for dissolution of the Network/Society provided that at least three-quarters of the Voting membership has cast their votes.

- e) On the dissolution of the Network/Society, it shall be necessary to decide the manner in which any surplus assets, after satisfaction of the Network/Society debts, shall be applied, and the voting on this matter shall be done by a simple majority at the General Assembly or by remote means. Upon its dissolution, the assets of the Network/Society shall not be distributed amongst its members but shall be transferred to a body with similar aims and objectives.

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