

Press Release

International Virtual Observatory Alliance Meeting For The First Time On The African Continent

Thursday, May 12 - The Virtual Observatory (VO) provides tools and protocols that facilitate access to online collections of astronomical data. These enable astronomers to work just as well in a small rural university, or even at home, as in an international observatory or large research university – provided they have access to the Internet and a good scientific education. It also adds value to expensive infrastructure by allowing data to be used and reused many times.

This is the first meeting of the International Virtual Observatory Alliance (IVOA) to take place on the African Continent and presents an exciting opportunity to showcase developments surrounding astronomy in this country.

Media are invited to the meeting taking place this week at the Stellenbosch Institute of Advanced Study (STIAS). Sessions start at 09:00 daily from 8-13 May 2016. Non-technical sessions which may be of greater interest to the media, take place on Thursday 12th and Friday 13th May. The meeting was preceded by an educator workshop on Virtual Observatory tools and applications which was hosted by the South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) on the 7th of May 2016. Following the meeting there will be a workshop held at the University of Zululand in Kwa-Zulu Natal for university students and lecturers.

The objective of the IVOA meeting is to provide a semi-annual venue for discussion and development of virtual observatory standards and VO-based applications. It also provides a formal opportunity for face-to-face meetings of the IVOA Executive and the various working groups.

The meeting was officially opened by the CEO of the National Research Foundation (NRF) Dr Molapo Qhobela, who in his introductory remarks expressed his delight that South Africa is hosting the first IVOA Interoperability meeting in Africa. This meeting is attended by over 90 registered participants from different astronomy institutes and observatories across the globe. Mr Kevin Govender, from the International Astronomical Union (IAU) Office of

Astronomy for Development (OAD) is among the plenary speakers in the education session on Friday, and will explore the role of virtual observatory tools in education and development. Christophe Arviset (European Space Agency) is the Chair of IVOA Executive. Local organization of the meeting is by Prof Patricia Whitelock from the South African Astro-informatics Alliance (SA³) and colleagues.

******ENDS******

Links

- Details: <http://ivoa2016.sa3.ac.za/>
- IVOA :To learn more about the IVOA as an organisation, read the "[About](#)" section
- Program for the meeting: <http://wiki.ivoa.net/twiki/bin/view/IVOA/InterOpMay2016>
- SA³: [South African Astroinformatics Alliance](#) (SA³)
- OAD website: www.astro4dev.org
- SAAO website: www.sao.ac.za

Contacts

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