

Annual Wikipedia Conference “Wikimania” to make debut in sub-Saharan Africa

- *First ever gathering in the sub-Saharan African region will be held in Cape Town, bringing together more than 700 people to discuss how to improve the diversity of knowledge represented on Wikipedia and Wikimedia sites*
- *Key participants include Wikimedia Foundation Executive Director Katherine Maher, Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales, as well as notable thought leaders from across the African continent and the world*

Cape Town, South Africa - 31 May 2018: Cape Town has won the bid to host the 14th annual Wikimania 2018 conference, the annual gathering of volunteers from around the world to celebrate Wikipedia and the Wikimedia projects, from 18-22 of July. More than 700 volunteers from around the world will come together to discuss and share ideas around the future of Wikipedia and free knowledge globally.

Attendees will be made up of members of the global Wikimedia movement, including those who volunteer their time to edit and improve Wikipedia articles, create bots, or organise events and projects to draw more content onto Wikipedia and the Wikimedia projects. Other open knowledge advocates will also attend, along with local academics, teachers, heritage specialists, and interested stakeholders.

Across more than 70 sessions, attendees will work to bring the conference theme: *Bridging knowledge gaps; the Ubuntu way forward*, to life by ensuring that some of the fundamental principles of the Wikimedia movement are contextualised within the rapidly evolving internet narrative.

Confirmed speakers include internet geographer [Dr. Martin Dittus](#), who will be speaking on economic development, labour, power, participation, and representation. [Joy Buolamwini](#), a noted female Artificial Intelligence expert fighting to remove bias in machine learning, and [Prof. Sean Jacobs](#) whose focus areas includes trends in digital culture are also invited thought leaders at the conference.

“Our vision is a world in which every single person can *freely share in the sum of all knowledge*. We believe that knowledge belongs to everyone, and that people from diverse backgrounds should be empowered to participate in the collaborative creation of knowledge,” said Katherine Maher, Executive Director, Wikimedia Foundation.

Wikimedia is also looking to expand its non-Western topics, where there is still not enough [locally relevant content](#) about Africa, particularly that which is gathered from African perspectives or shared in African languages. The same could be said for indigenous knowledge and local knowledge from many places outside the Global North, much of which is still missing. South Africa has active [Afrikaans](#) and [isiXhosa](#) Wikipedia editions, but most of the other indigenous languages from the continent [are either missing or do not have regular contributions on](#) Wikipedia.

Challenges with software localisation, the structure of data, and even the forms of knowledge that Wikimedia has defined as “verifiable” (text-based, rather than oral, for example) are some of the issues the movement is grappling with as it moves actively towards incorporating more diverse kinds of knowledge within Wikipedia and the Wikimedia projects.

This year’s Wikimania conference will take place at the Southern Sun, Cape Sun Hotel. Wikimania

2018 is co-organised by [Wikimedia South Africa](#), the local Wikimedia affiliate organisation of South Africa, and the [Wikimedia Foundation](#), the non-profit that supports the Wikipedia and other free knowledge projects.

Wikipedia is a collaborative collection of knowledge that is open for anyone to edit. Today Wikipedia is available in more than 45 million across nearly 300 languages, and is read more than 15 billion times every month. Volunteer editors from around the world, or Wikipedians, come together to write and update Wikipedia articles in real time, collaborating to ensure that information is neutral and based in reliable sources. Each month, more than 200,000 people edit Wikipedia.

The Wikimedia Foundation is the nonprofit organisation that supports Wikipedia, the Wikimedia free knowledge projects, and its MISSION OF FREE KNOWLEDGE FOR EVERY SINGLE PERSON.