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SCIENCE
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SCIENCE IN SOCIETY | SOCIETY IN SCIENCE

CONFERENCE NEWSLETTER

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Conference etiquette and tips

If you are a little rusty on the 'how-to's' of conference etiquette then this is just the help you have been looking for. These very simple yet practical guide-lines will help you to make the most of the Second ASCC.

1. Do your homework on who will be at the conference and whom you would like to meet. The opening reception is the perfect time to scout the 'who's who' and acquaint yourself with your desired crowd.
2. Bring your business cards. Conferences are pivotal networking events that can boost your business or career in future so do not be left out on this opportunity to sell your brand.
3. During general sessions always bring your notebook and pen to jot down key arguments and notes you may have. These will add further relevance when networking with others.
4. Start conversations with the person you sit next to, especially if you do not know them. A friendly greeting and some small talk prior to the session will leave a good impression on others.
5. Always sit in the middle of a row of seats so that you will not be isolated at the ends.
6. Be well versed in current affairs around the world, you will be meeting diverse people from different countries. Knowledge of global happenings is key to effective conversation building.
7. Switch off your phone or put it on silent during sessions.
8. Stay for the closing session. Many people skip this session but it is highly important that you attend it. For every beginning there is an end, and how you end things off with your new associates can make for interesting future meetings.



Entertainment at the welcoming function was provided by the marimba band, Basadi Le Meropa.

Entertainment during ASCC2

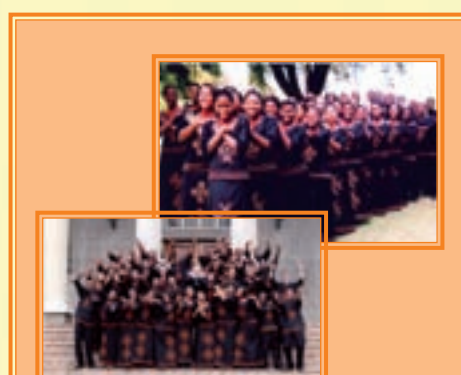
ASCC 2009 promises to be an informative, stimulating and exciting conference. The feature performances of Basadi Le Meropa and the Ekurhuleni Youth Choir will no doubt complement and enhance the overall experience.

Basadi Le Meropa was formed in 2003 and features an all-female cast. Breaking the mould of traditionally male-dominated cultural activities, these talented women use their music, dance and song in unique and vibrant ways to tell their stories. From marimbas, drums and dances featuring stick-fighting to the uniquely South African Pantsula and Township Jive, Basadi Le Meropa's lineup boasts a bit of everything. Delegates of this ASCC2 will be treated to performers that have wowed crowds at the openings of South Africa's Parliament and the Women's World Cup Cricket. The group has also toured to the Netherland and Belgium; all the while spreading the concept of 'Proudly South African'.

The Ekurhuleni Youth Choir blends the sounds of traditional African music, Jazz and Pop. The choir was formed in 2003 with the goal to aid underprivileged, talented and aspiring teenagers and young adults to perform both locally and abroad. Since then, they have shared a stage with the likes of local stars Nianel and Laurika Rauch. They have also performed with various choirs and orchestras from all over the world,

including Radcliffe Choral Society Girls Choir from Harvard University, USA, the Drakensburg Boys' Choir and the South African National Youth Orchestra. They have also released two studio albums. The latest one is called 'Alive' and lends itself to what it means to be 'Alive with possibility' in South Africa.

While this conference aims to shed light on the bettering of science communication through development, education and upliftment, Basadi Le Meropa and the Ekurhuleni Youth Choir have a similar goal. Through the use of song, dance and music, they wish to convey the messages of hope, unity, opportunity and optimism.



Be sure not to miss these dynamic acts in action during the conference!

Basadi Le Meropa
Wednesday 18 February 2009
18:00 - 19:00: Performing background music in the Grill Foyer.

Ekurhuleni Youth Choir
Thursday 19 February 2009
09:30 - 11:00: Performing 3 songs during the Opening Ceremony.

Science Communication expertise needed across Africa

"The ASCC2 is vitally important for the communication of science, especially for African and other developing countries around the world," said Professor Mohamed Hassan, Executive Director of the Academy of Sciences of the Developing World (TWAS) and President of the African Academy of Science and one of the ASCC2 keynote speakers, on his arrival at the OR Tambo Airport yesterday. "There are many controversial scientific issues common to all these countries, including GMOs, biofuel, stemcells, as well as frontier sciences, such as nanotechnology - which is emerging faster than any other science sector. According to him, science communication is vital to communicate especially the safety and ethical issues related to nanotechnology and other cutting edge technologies.

In essence, he believes science has to be communicated by experts using evidence based communication. Capacity building in Science Communication is crucial. "We need well informed and qualified people to be communicating, as part of a greater science communication network, to take the results and stories of how science is solving real, everyday problems to the public, as well as to the decision and policy makers."

As yet, Science Communication is not recognised as a discipline in its own right in many African countries, despite being recognised as a highly specialised discipline elsewhere in the world. He believes the Academies of Science in Africa should play a major role to establish the Science Communication focus in Africa.

Now that science communicators are in contact throughout Africa via networks such as ASCC, the collective problems are known and the underlying challenge of lack of public engagement of science is clear. Based on this foundation,



he proposes that an African Science Communication Centre be established to help build up the human resources and expertise needed across the continent.

Attend the opening session of ASCC2 and the special lecture by Professor Mohamed Hassan to find out more.

"Moving on from the ASCC1"

Commenting on the first African Science Communication Conference (ASCC1) held in Port Elizabeth in 2006, Beverley Damonse, SAASTA's Executive Director says, "one of the main aims of ASCC1 was to establish an African network of science communicators with a view of sharing best practice and providing a voice for African science communication in the international arena". Damonse is at the helm of the SAASTA team that organised ASCC1 and that is also facilitating the second African Science Communication Conference.

The first ASCC was a success as initial networks have emerged and are becoming stronger. Apart from the change of scenery due to the conference's relocation to South Africa's Gauteng Province, another departure this year is that the focus is towards the African Consolidated Plan of Action for Science and Technology. Damonse added that, "science communication is influenced by historical and cultural contexts and those must be considered in formulating our practices".

As far as the programme is concerned, Damonse is especially looking forward to the contribution to ASCC2 by the highly esteemed Professor



Diran Onifade (Nigeria), Beverley Damonse (South Africa) and Prof Mohamed Hassan, Executive Director of TWAS at the welcoming function of ASCC2.

Mohamed HA Hassan, Secretary General of the Academy of Sciences of the Developing World (TWAS), and the other keynote speakers.

The future of the ASCC? Damonse hopes that support can be built as well as capacity and that this conference will be a truly African one, providing a tool for new dialogues, and a drawcard for science communicators to new African locations.



The Johannesburg Observatory – making science fun and accessible

The location of tonight's social function is the Observatory Science and Technology Site. This historic landmark of Johannesburg was declared the city's first meteorological observatory site a little over 100 years ago. At the time one could still encounter leopards in the area.

The original owners wished the site to be used for astronomy and related scientific activities. Since its inception, the Observatory has witnessed exciting scientific developments, such as the discovery of *Proxima Centauri*, the star closest to the sun, in 1915, and the first images ever taken of manmade satellites. More recent past activities include monthly public lectures, courses and telescope viewing presented by the Astronomical Society of Southern Africa, as well as science fairs and exhibitions. Situated on a hill a little removed from the humdrum of Africa's economic giant, the site is now dedicated to the promotion of science, engineering and technology.

Management of the Johannesburg Observatory was transferred to the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA) in 2003. SAASTA has since started to revamp the site as a multifaceted interactive science park and education

hub. Developments include the upgrade and restoration of buildings and roads as well as landscaping. Environmental awareness is at the centre of the building design, with the sustainable use of resources a main feature. Technologies geared to this purpose include shading, heat transfer, solar water heating, photovoltaic cells, energy-efficient lighting and climate control, curbing of light pollution (especially in relation to viewing the night sky through telescopes), and water-saving devices.

As part of its dedication to science education and promotion, the Observatory will offer a range of activities to teachers, learners and the general public. Facilities such as forensic science and computer laboratories as well as a resource centre will host forums and programmes (some of which specially focus on underprivileged youth from townships) to present science education in a friendly, fun and informal way. Phase 1 has just been completed and is now open to groups of visitors.

In the long term, SAASTA hopes the Observatory Science and Technology Site will become part of a whole science tourism route in Gauteng, encompassing the Sci-Bono Discovery Centre in Newtown, the Origins Centre at the University of the Witwatersrand, the Johannesburg Planetarium, and Maropeng and the Sterkfontein Caves in the Cradle of Humankind. We hope you will enjoy your visit here.



Science goes beyond inventing faster planes and better toothpaste – it is a tool to transform the attitudes of society, via Science Communication.

– DR CHANDRA NAUTIYAL, INDIA (PARALLEL SESSION 16 SPEAKER, "A LOGIC-BASED APPROACH TO A RUMOUR TRIGGERED CHAOS IN SITAPUR, INDIA")

We need Science Communication to make a change in society – and is a tool, along with education, which [the ASCC2] can sharpen to improve the standard of living for the everyday person. People are using science in their everyday lives and simply don't know it. We have to step up as science communicators and explain it in a way that can be understood.

– SURJIT SINGH, INDIA (PARALLEL SESSION 14 SPEAKER, "TWEAKING YOUNG MINDS: AN INTERACTIVE WAY TO TEACH SCIENCE")



Science communicators play a role in satisfying curiosity – as translators of this science, using an evidence based approach.

– DR CHANDRA NAUTIYAL, INDIA (PARALLEL SESSION 16 SPEAKER, "A LOGIC-BASED APPROACH TO A RUMOUR TRIGGERED CHAOS IN SITAPUR, INDIA")

Science journalism is incredibly important because it informs readers and listeners and viewers of the world around them, of life on Earth, of where we come from, and ultimately where we are going. And, it is never boring.

– ELSABÉ BRITS, JOURNALIST AT DIE BURGER, SOUTH AFRICA

TWAS – developing science in the developing world

In 1983 Nobel laureate, Abdus Salam, and others, identified the need for the advancement of science in parts of the world that were lacking the funds, skills and resources to do so. Two years later the United Nations (UN) launched the Third World Network of Scientific Organisations (TWAS), which, today, has become a leading academy of science for the developing world.

With international involvement from the likes of Sweden, Kuwait, India and China, as well as with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) managing its funds, the Italian-based TWAS keeps building foundations for the development of science in the Third World.

The Academy aims to achieve its goals through supplying grants for the building of scientific capacity, encouraging South-South and North-South science collaboration, and enhancing the free exchange of scientific information. It also awards prizes honouring scientific achievements. These accolades are usually presented during their General Conferences, which, for the first time this year, will be held in Durban, South Africa in October*.

TWAS' main objectives are to aid the development of science in developing countries though recognising, supporting and promoting excellence in scientific research. It also believes in responding to the needs of young scientists in countries lacking science and technology and aims to promote communication between countries to work out problems facing the developing world.

The Academy works closely with research councils, other academies, and ministries of science and technology.

The Third World Organisation for Women in Science (TWOWS), the Inter Academy Panel on International Issues (IAP) and the Inter Academy Medical Panel (IAMP) are all examples of how TWAS aids and supports organisations in an administrative capacity.

ASCC2 is proud to have the Executive Director of TWAS, Professor Mohamed Hassan, address delegates for a special lecture on how science communication can positively impact everyday life through influencing policy, and facilitating economic growth and innovative thought, at the conference's opening session. Hassan is not only involved with TWAS but also many other science organisations – including being President of the

African Academy of Sciences (AAS). The professor has done extensive research in areas of theoretical plasma physics, and physics of wind erosion and sand transport.

Part of the advancement of science can be reached through the development of science communication, and through effective communication, understanding and knowledge. And it is through initiatives such as the ASCC2 and TWAS that science can have the opportunity to positively impact the world around us.

**For more information on TWAS' 11th General Conference & 29th General Meeting, keep an eye on their web page: www.twas.org*



Who we are

SciDev.Net – the Science and Development Network – is the leading source of news, views and analysis about science and technology in the developing world. SciDev.Net enables science communicators to not only stay up to date on breaking news, but also tap into an array of invaluable research tools. An entire section of its free-access website is dedicated to science communication, providing a variety of resources on influencing policymakers, promoting and writing about science, publishing research, and networking.

To access these free resources and more, visit www.scidev.net/en/science-communication.

SciDev.Net also organises science communication workshops to train journalists, science communicators and policymakers from developing regions.

Meet the team!

SciDev.Net's science communication editor, **Marina Joubert**, and Africa news editor, **Christina Scott**, are attending the ASCC.

They will both participate in the workshop titled "A voice for science from the developing world" (parallel session 3, 11h00, 19 February).

Christina Scott will chair the session titled "Research methods for the assessment of communication programmes" (parallel session 8, 16h00, 19 February).

Marina Joubert will take part in two round table discussions: "The future of science journalism teaching" (parallel session 9, 16h00, 19 February) and "Facilitating public engagement" (parallel session 12, 11h00, 20 February).

You can also drop by the **SciDev.Net stand** to find out more about the organisation and have a chat with Marina and Christina.

SciDev.Net blog

Visit SciDev.Net's blog for updates and insights from the ASCC. Go to www.scidev.net/en/science-communication and click on the blog hyperlink at the top.

Join the network

Become a member of SciDev.Net's international network and start receiving weekly news updates by signing up at www.scidev.net/sign-up.