February 2020

Dear SONA Members

Welcome to the Year 2020. This is the beginning of a new decade and SONA will endeavour to be up to speed on matters concerning Neuroscience on the African continent.

A. Report Back from 10th IBRO World Congress 2019, Daegu, South Korea

IBRO Governing Council Meeting.
Matters arising: In the minutes was a reference to a ‘Taskforce on Africa’ that had not taken place. I did request that the Taskforce should be set up. With the new IBRO Executive now in place, I have been invited by the new President, Professor Tracy Bale to participate in an External Review of IBRO scheduled for June 2020. Do convey to me any issues that you think I should bring up with IBRO through the Task force assignment and the Review process.

IBRO Global Engagement and Outreach Event.
I was invited to present a talk at this event following our successful Global Engagement and Outreach event during the 2019 SONA Lagos Meeting. My talk was titled “Interfacing with Policymakers and Organizations for Brain Wellness in Africa”. I highlighted among other things, the need for the knowledge of the brain on the African continent, Translation of basic brain facts into African languages, Teaching Tool Workshops beyond the tertiary institution and for initiating Endowments for Brain Research in Africa. I wrapped up with a call for an African Brain Initiative. The Global Engagement event is something that should be undertaken in every country on the continent.


This forum brought together Neuroscientists and Ministers of Education or their Representatives from some countries to discuss the Science of Learning. It was a joint forum by UNESCO-IBE and IBRO. During the forum, the IBE launched dedicated website for this project: [http://ibelearning.wpengine.com](http://ibelearning.wpengine.com/)
The Forum concluded with a ministerial dialogue on possible initiatives toward applying neuroscientific knowledge to strengthen teaching and learning, and to improve learning outcomes. The expectation is that Neuroscientists (via their national societies exist) should engage with the Ministry/Department of Education in their respective country and so how to work on this initiative. Details of this High Level forum can be found at [http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/event/ibe-unesco-leads-global-dialogue-neuroscience-and-future-education-and-learning](http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/event/ibe-unesco-leads-global-dialogue-neuroscience-and-future-education-and-learning).
Discussion with the Editor in Chief of IBRO Report Journal
As you are all aware by now, the Abstracts of presentations at the 14 SONA.17th NSN conference at Lagos Nigeria was published as a Supplement in IBRO Reports in December 2019. At Busan, I initiated a discussion with the Editor in Chief, Professor Ying-Shing Chan on publishing full manuscript of those abstracts and other manuscripts in a Special Issue of the journal. We are in the final stages of reaching an agreement on how to proceed with this. However, I need to indicate that this process will benefit first, those who would have paid their SONA dues. You can contact the Treasurer, Prof Sadiq Yusuf or the SONA secretariat (sona@confco.co.za) on renewal of Annual dues.

Participants from the following African countries were at the World Congress in Daegu, South Korea: South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Eritrea/UAE, Uganda, Egypt, Tunisia, Sudan and Morocco. Some pictures will be posted on SONA website.
For photo overview of the IBRO World Congress in over 7000 pictures, go to flickr.com.ibro 2019 or click https://www.flickr.com/photos/ibro2019/

Interview with the ALBA Network at Daegu
Find herewith the link to my interview as SONA Secretary-General with the ALBA Network. We are encouraged to recognise diversity in brain research looking at equality and diversity issues affecting different population groups and gender.
www.alba.network/interview-series-diversity

B. 2021 SONA Accra, Ghana 28-28 April
I had a brief meeting with the Co-Chair, LOC, Dr Peter Bainey at Daegu. The date is 25-28 April 2021. The ‘Save the Date’ Flyer as published in the IBRO Newsletter (https://ibro.org/newsletter-2019-2/#news) has been circulated to members via email. Do diarise the dates. Following interactions at Daegu, we are likely going to have symposia on Neuroethics, Neuroinformatics, Neuroscience & the Science of Education. Another communication with Registration fees will follow soon. The conference will be coordinated by the SONA Secretariat for ease of payment of SONA Annual dues and Conference Registration and payments as there will be different charges for SONA members and Non-Members.
Likewise, we will soon provide information on Proposals for Symposia, Workshops, Luncheon Sessions, etc. The Director, Development and Communications IBRO, Ms. Tasia Asakawa, has indicate her interest to come to the Ghana Meeting and set up an IBRO stand.

Travel Grant to SONA 2021
We hope to secure some dedicated funds for SONA Travel grant to the 2021 SONA Conference in Accra, Ghana. It is only those who will be up to date with their 2020 and 2021 Annual dues that will be considered for the Travel Grant. Details will be provided in the second half of this year and on the conference website. In addition, I will like to encourage members to apply for IBRO Travel grants in the second half of 2020.
C. Society for Neuroscience (SfN) 2020, Washington DC, USA
The SONA secretariat usually receives limited number of SfN Abstract codes to give to SONA Members interested in participating in the SfN Meetings in the US. With this code, the requirement for membership of SfN before registration and abstract submission is usually waived by the SfN. Only those who have paid their 2020 SONA Annual dues will qualify. The call for SfN abstracts will open on 09 April 2020. See link below for details. [https://www.sfn.org/meetings/neuroscience-2020/abstracts/call-for-abstracts](https://www.sfn.org/meetings/neuroscience-2020/abstracts/call-for-abstracts)

D. Survey with Welcome Trust, UK.
A summary of the Survey will guide the subthemes for SONA Conferences. I am expecting a feedback from Welcome Trust on how they will like to engage further with SONA. In the meantime, there will be a conference meeting sometime in March with the Wellcome Trust UK.

E. SONA New Website
As approved at the 2019 General Assembly, a new SONA website will become available in the first quarter of 2020. The Secretariat is working hard on achieving this. We will use the new website to also create a link for the Management of Registration, invoicing, payment and communications for the 15th SONA/4th GNS conference that will take place in Accra, Ghana.

SONA Webinar Series
Thanks to Mosab Ali Awadelkareem and his committee on social media engagement for the SONA Webinar series so far. We will be having more webinars and with time, members of SONA will receive additional benefits via this series.

F. 2020 Conference Announcements by SONA Corporate Affiliate members
   a. 4th Congress of the Mali Neuroscience Society Conference (MNS) in March
   b. 18th Conference of the Neuroscience Society of Nigeria (NSN) in July

G. 2020 IBRO-ARC Funded Activities/Schools.
My summary of the funded School for 2020 is as follows:
One (1) Activity in each of these five countries: Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Senegal and Nigeria. Two (2) Activities in each of these two countries: Egypt and Morocco Three (3) Activities in the DRC. The venue for the Teaching Tools Workshop (TTW) is yet to be announced.

If I receive information from any of the Organizers, I will upload it on the SONA website and social media platform. Do remember there are also Advanced Neuroscience Training Programmes that will take place at Morocco and Cape Town.
H. Journal for SONA and the African Academy of Neurology (AFAN)
A joint Publication Committee has been set up and mandated to commence activity in this respect. I have proposed Dr Mounir Ouzir (Morocco) as the Associate Editor from the SONA side to cover the Basic Neurosciences and AFAN has proposed Editors to cover the Clinical Neurosciences. Dr Ouzir can be reached on this email address: m.ouzir@gmail.com

I. SONA Elections
SONA Governing Council
The three-year tenure of the current Governing Council will end this year 2020 (2018-2020). In the second half of the year, I will send out a call for Nominations for four Regular members at large and Members from outside Africa. To qualify, the members must be up to date with the SONA Annual dues

SONA Executive Members
In the last quarter of the year, I will send out a call for Nominations for SONA Executive with the exception of the post of the Assistant Secretary-General. The election will be conducted during the General Assembly at Accra, Ghana.

J. SONA 2023
You will recall that during the 2019 General Assembly, a decision was taken to have SONA 2023 in Cape Town, South Africa if the Southern African Neuroscience Society (SANS) secures the bid to host the 2023 IBRO World Congress. Unfortunately, Spain won the bid as circulated already. In the light of that, I will send out a call for Bids for the 16th International Conference of SONA in 2023. The decision will be taken during the 2021 General Assembly in Accra, Ghana.

K. Payment of SONA Annual Dues
I will like to remind SONA members that we will be implementing section ‘h’ of article 3 (membership) of the SONA Constitution. “Any fee paying member who falls into arrears for more than 12 months shall automatically cease henceforth to be a member of the Society. The Executive Committee may, however, at its discretion, reinstate such a member on payment of the total amount of the subscription outstanding.” The treasurer will be monitoring this. My advice is for members to pay their dues in two-yearly manner targeting the year a conference will hold in order not to lose the benefit of membership.

L. Internet safety
No officer of SONA/IBRO will request for assistance with any payment by email to any officer or members of SONA. So do not entertain or engage any such emails.

Finally, this is an exciting time to be part of the happenings in the global Neuroscience Community. SONA will like every members to be part of this experience.

Professor Amadi O. Ihunwo
Secretary-General, SONA