Communication to SONA Members

March 2018

As we enter the second quarter of 2018, I will like to take this opportunity to wish all SONA Members a fulfilling Year. I will also like to use this opportunity to provide some updates on the affairs of SONA as every one of us has a role to play as we create a vibrant Society once information is communicated appropriately.

Membership of SONA

The SONA constitution states that ‘All individual members of the corporate Member Organizations shall be entitled to individual membership of SONA’. In the absence of a Society at Country or regional level, individuals can apply to be members of SONA after a once off payment of the membership dues. As require by the constitution, I am proposing $20 (twenty US dollars) for Individuals where no National Society exist.

For Societies, the current minimum of US$100 provides the membership coverage for all their members and the opportunity for their President to be on the Governing Council. The amount will be subject to review as the membership of the National Societies increase as indicated by the Constitution. This automatically makes the bona fide members of National Societies, members of SONA. In this respect, the Secretariat will need to have a list of bona fide member of the Corporate members.

The membership fee is a once off payment while the individual annual fee is to be paid yearly. When a member does not pay for any year, his or her membership will go into abeyance for that year. As communicated already by the Treasurer, the level of the fees for the type of membership is as follow: Student ($20), Regular Membership ($50), Associate Membership ($50) and Corporate Membership ($100). As per our constitution, the renewal and annual membership fee should be completed no later than the 30th day of June each year.

Globally, successful societies depend on the financial contributions of her members. Let me thank those whose annual dues were paid during the SONA 2017 Entebbe meeting and afterwards. Following this, members expect some benefits from the Society.

Revised Benefits of Membership of SONA

The following are as indicated on the SONA website with some additions.

- Reduced registration rate for SONA conference
- SONA Newsletter when produced
- Information on research and training opportunities for African neuroscientists
- Eligibility for travel assistance to SONA conferences and workshops
- Eligible to apply and be awarded funds from Organizations affiliated with SONA, e.g. IBRO-ARC, ISN, etc. I have added this benefit just as it obtains globally. If one is NOT a bona fide member of SONA, he or she should not access funds that are linked to the Society. We will need the IBRO-ARC to help with this so that SONA can build some financial independence.
- Eligible to publication discounts in special issues of journals organised under the auspices of SONA. Some of you are aware that in the absence of a journal by SONA, there has been Special issues of Journal Publications that provided waivers for SONA members. E.g. Frontiers in.

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Neuroanatomy with Professors Nilesh Patel, Vivienne Russel and Nouria Lakhdar-Ghazal as Editors of the Research Topic: Neuroscience in Africa. I also recall that the Metabolic Brain Disease Journal had a similar supplement.

- Eligible to be appointed into any subcommittee of SONA
- Eligible to vote and be voted for into any office of SONA.

New Corporate Membership
I will like to extend our welcome two new National Societies and their members.

1. The Ghana Neuroscience Society (GNS) with Dr Patrick Amoateng as President
2. The Cameroon Association For Neuroscience (CAMANE) with Prof Elisabeth Ngo Bum as President. Therefore, Dr Amoateng and Prof Bum will become members of the Governing Council once the corporate membership fee is received. All recognised member of GNS and CAMANE are now members of SONA. All each member needs to pay will be the Annual dues.

Office of the Treasurer
1. During the 2017 GA at Entebbe, the past Treasurer, could not operate the account of SONA at Nairobi. Presently payment is only by bank transfer and we acknowledge challenges some members have faced with this form of payment. The Treasurer, Prof Sadiq Yusuf is in touch with Prof Nilesh to rectify all the banking challenges and explore the possibility of a credit card payment option.
2. I have proposed that the Treasurer sets up a Finance Committee. Prof Nilesh Patel as Rep for the Kenya Neuroscience Society (KNS) becomes a member of the Governing Council after payment of the Corporate Membership fee for the KNS. As the signatory to the SONA Bank Account in Nairobi he will be coopted into the Finance Committee to ease the operation of the SONA Bank Account in Nairobi.
3. We have received a suggestion for the Treasurer to introduce a 3-Year dues discount for Regular and Honorary Members. Instead of paying $150, a discount of $30 will be implemented such that any member who opts for this will only pay $120. We will subsequently request the General Assembly to rectify this subsequently.
4. The Finance Committee will take responsibility for the actual work of fundraising for SONA. The following avenues will be a good starting point with contact persons:
   b. ISN – Secretary General, Professor Amadi O Ihunwo
   c. EU – Active members based in Europe via the Treasurer, Prof Sadiq Yusuf
   d. IBRO – ARC: Chair & members.
   e. Private Industry and Foundations Welcome Trust, etc – Treasurer

SONA Education Committee
I have proposed a SONA Education Committee to be made up of past James Kimani Lecture Awardees (Desire Tshala-Katumbay, Richard Idro, Samir Ahbouch, Philip Akinyemi, Noelene Nakasujja) and some nominated recipients of IBRO Fellowship and/or the IBRO/ISN Fellowships. They will be required to act as mentors to younger colleagues in matters of Research visits, travel...

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grants, grant writing and educational programmes. I have asked Prof Desire Tshala-Katumbay as the First recipient of the James Kimani Lecture Award to Chair the Education Committee. This Education Committee will work closely too with Council members such as Professors Zigmond and Weeks and myself. On a personal note, this Committee should take advantage of the current electronic academic learning platforms as I envisage that with time, they might be able to organise and host online course(s)/webinar or other courses during SONA Meetings that could attract some additional funding for SONA.

Workshops: There has been a suggestion that Workshops on (a) professional skills, (b) research ethics, and (c) new methodologies should become a permanent part of SONA meetings (or pre-meetings) and could be funded by registration fees and the SONA budget with time. However, I will like to encourage those who may have access to some funds for such workshop to continue assisting SONA.

Newsletter/Journal for SONA
Although the General Assembly at Entebbe was of the view that the Newsletter should be a purely SONA document, I am reconsidering the approach and how to go forward with publication of an Electronic version of the Newsletter. This report would have ideally being part of the Newsletter.

I have received suggestions to pursue the possibility of initiating a Journal for SONA. However, this venture will possibly be in conjunction with a sister society. I believe have established researchers that can assist with this project and will so make a call in this direction.

Matters from Sister Partner Societies

A. International Society for Neurochemistry (ISN)

i. At the Paris AGM in August 2017, the ISN was considering initiating a Neurochemistry Consortium and in the absence of a Neurochemistry Society in Africa, SONA will be the Society that ISN will like to be involved in the Consortium. I am expecting some additional information on this and will communicate subsequently to SONA members.

ii. Women in Neurochemistry. Following my discussion with the Women in Neurochemistry group under the American Society for Neurochemistry (ASN), Prof Dana McTigue of Ohio State University has agreed in principle to facilitate a Session in Women in Neurochemistry/Neuroscience during the SONA 2019 Conference in Lagos, Nigeria. I am in discussion with the ASN Executive on further partnerships with SONA. The outcome of this will be for the benefit of members who are up to date with their Annual dues.

iii. I will like to congratulate Anthony Eduviere whose proposal has been accepted from the African Region as part of the ISN Young Investigator Colloquium for 2019 ISN Montreal Canada Meeting (4-8 August 2019). The Calls for ISN Travel Grant and ISN Advance Neuroscience School will open in January 2019. SONA members are encouraged to submit applications when calls for proposals are made for the ISN Meetings. I will like to see active participation of SONA members of IBRO Alumni in matters of that platform

iv. I will like to see active participation of SONA members with PhDs of less than 3 years, or postdocs and recipients of an ISN Research funding participating actively in matters of the ISN Young Scientist Committee. Email: yssc@neurochemistry.org
B. International Brain Research Organization (IBRO)

As a member of the IBRO Governing Council, I will be providing periodic reports from IBRO to SONA members.

i. The New Secretary General of IBRO is Professor Keiji Tanaka from Japan and he began his tenure from 1 January 2018.

ii. The IBRO revised bylaws have been officially approved by the Governing Council. A copy is available on the IBRO website.

iii. The call for symposia and mini symposia for the 2019 IBRO World Congress in Daegu, South Korea is still open until 30 April 2018. Members are encouraged to submit proposals. You can seek advice from Senior SONA members.

iv. I will like to see SONA members who are IBRO Alumni participating actively in matters of the IBRO Alumni.

14th SONA/17th NSN 2019 Conference, Lagos Nigeria, 24-28 March

I have received the First flyer from Prof James Olopade, Chair of the LOC on the preparations for the 14th SONA/17th NSN Conference that will take place in Lagos, Nigeria from 24-28 March 2018. The flyer is already facebook and on the IBRO website. It will be posted soon on the SONA website with some additional information.

An Awards Committee (chaired by the Secretary General).

In addition to reviewing possible Conference related Prizes for best poster/oral presenter, etc. I will like to take this opportunity to appeal to Senior Members of SONA and individuals who will like to bequeath a SONA prize or can do so via an organization to get in touch with me. This Committee will also recognize those who have made significant contributions to the existence of SONA for induction into the “SONA Hall of Fame”. My proposal is to launch the Hall of Fame during SONA 2019 in Lagos, Nigeria as part of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of SONA. A symposium on the History of SONA will feature during the SONA 2019. This will include some pictorial and video presentations to be co-ordinated by one of the Governing Council members, Mr Mosab Ali AWADELKAREEM (Email: mosb555@gmail.com). Those who do have photos from the inauguration of SONA in Nairobi to date could share them with the SONA Secretariat and myself. Mr Mosab will soon provide the details to the video documentary.

Brain Awareness Week 2018

I will like to congratulate all the Groups that were able to undertake a Brain Awareness Week (BAW) activity during the 2018 Brain Awareness Week. You can send me reports with photographs so that they will be uploaded on the SONA website. Do remember to send your reports to Dana Foundation. (www.dana.org/BAW)

SONA Secretariat

The SONA Secretariat is located at the University of Nairobi as a recognition of where SONA was born. Ms Marietta is the staff that handles the society’s communication with the Secretary General. She also oversees the website and achieving of the Society minutes and some documents. SONA is grateful to IBRO via the ARC for the allowance for Ms Marietta. The expectation therefore is that the Secretariat should be more active in confirmation of receipt of payment of dues by members.
Secretariat will also become a repository of SONA documentations via the Secretary General and subsequently interact with Organizers of future SONA Conferences. We hope to have a SONA Stand during the 2019 SONA conference in Lagos, Nigeria. In the light of the SONA Secretariat located in Nairobi, my expectation will be that there should be a vibrant Kenya Neuroscience Society (KNS).

SONA website
We are working on the website to make it more interactive and to contain current information for members. A Photo gallery of the 2017 SONA Entebbe, Uganda will soon be made available on the SONA website and this will be the pattern for subsequent SONA Conferences. Announcements of Events, Calls for Schools, Fellowships will become a common feature on the websites. I will post on the website information on conferences of Corporate Membership Societies that I receive in order to increase visibility and interactions across countries on the continent. My expectation is that vibrant National Societies should liaise with other countries to see how to initiate Neuroscience Groups where none exist and organise a Neuroscience activity. The Regional Secretaries will be driving this with me and reporting back to SONA

Finally, I will like to call on all members of SONA to use their contact and experiences to see SONA become a more vibrant Society representing the interests of all the 54 countries on the continent. We are the ones to make the difference and so I call on all to ‘Make a difference in SONA’.

Professor Amadi O. Ihunwo, PhD
Secretary General