

Building a new Intergovernmental Organisation for ground-based Astronomy

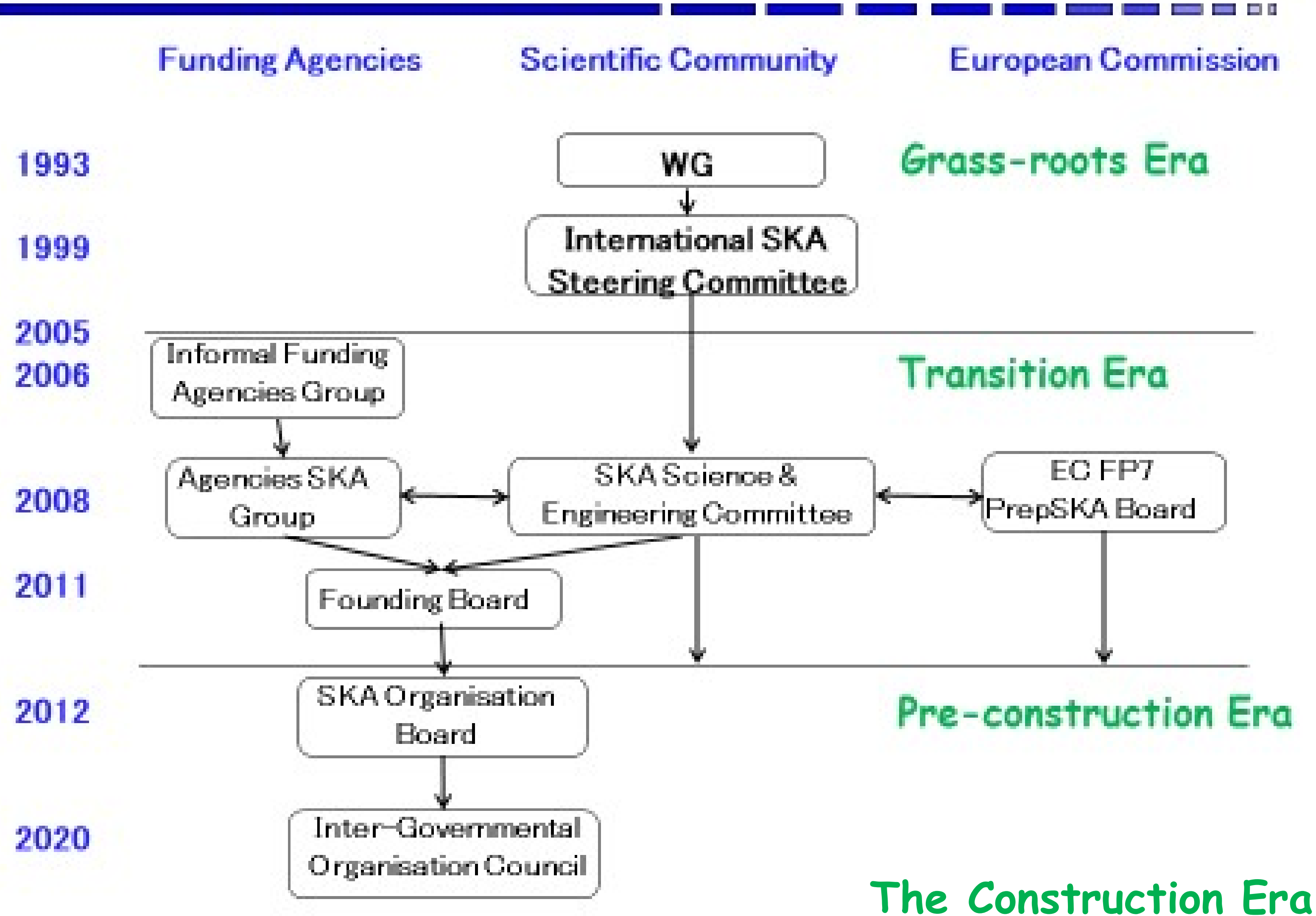
Simon Berry, SKAO, 10th November 2022



A brief history of SKA, the path to the SKA Observatory and France's place in it:



Evolution of SKA Governance



Credit: R. Schilizzi



France in the 'pre-SKA Observatory' SKA.... (1)

- Signing ceremony for the 'Founding Board' – Rome April 2011
-the critical step that led to the formation of the SKA Organisation
-the first legal entity to govern the SKA Project



France in the 'pre-SKA Observatory' SKA.... (2)

- July 2018 – Cape Town
- Maison SKA-France joins the SKA Organisation
- ...becomes the 12th Member of SKA Org



Creating the SKAO

- SKA Organisation member governments agreed to develop an Intergovernmental Organisation in 2014-2015
- Rationale:
 - Appropriate for a genuinely global research infrastructure of SKA's scale
 - Government commitment: political stability, funding stability
 - A level of independence in structure
 - 'Freedom to operate', specifically through procurement process, employment rules etc
- Building an organisation based on successful IGOs such as ESO, EMBL, CERN



Convention



- Negotiations on a Convention/Treaty began 2015
- Establishing SKAO as an international organization for astronomy comprising States working together
- Convention defines:
 - Members (States)
 - Associate Members (States)
 - Cooperating Partners (States, institutions, others...)



International negotiations

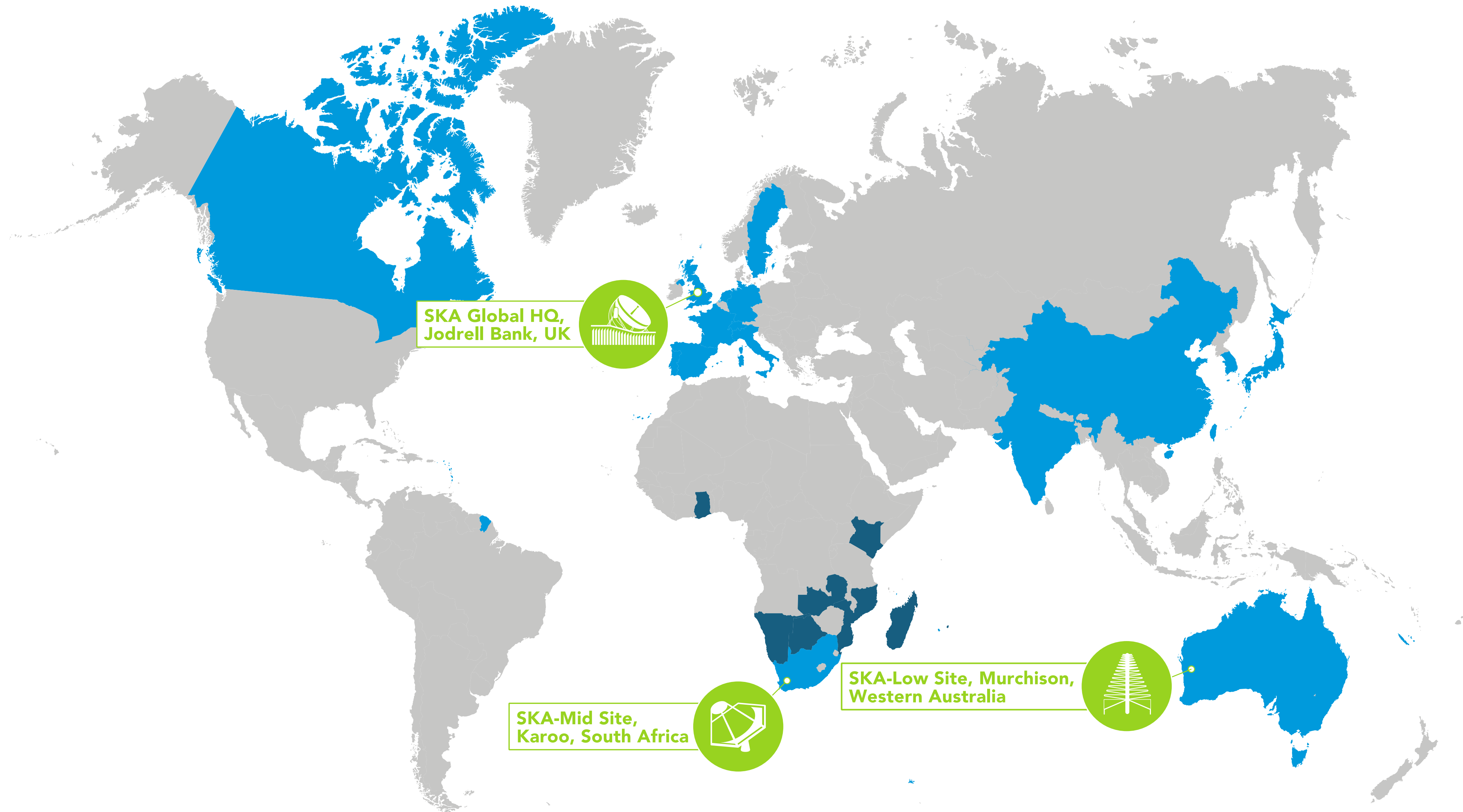
- 4 plenary meetings between 2015 and 2016 – all in Rome, led by the Italian government
- Specialist working groups in financial and policy areas
- 'Convention Task Force' active 2017 and into 2018
- Finalisation of detailed policies and support for Initialling 2018 into 2019











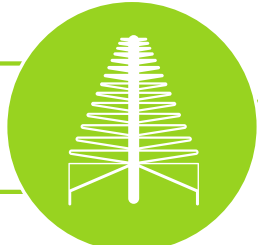
SKA Global HQ,
Jodrell Bank, UK



SKA-Mid Site,
Karoo, South Africa



SKA-Low Site, Murchison,
Western Australia



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Who are we?

Full membership

Australia, China, Italy, Netherlands,
Portugal, South Africa, Switzerland, UK

Accession stage

France, Spain (soon Germany)

Interim agreements

Canada, India, Sweden

Early stages

Japan, South Korea



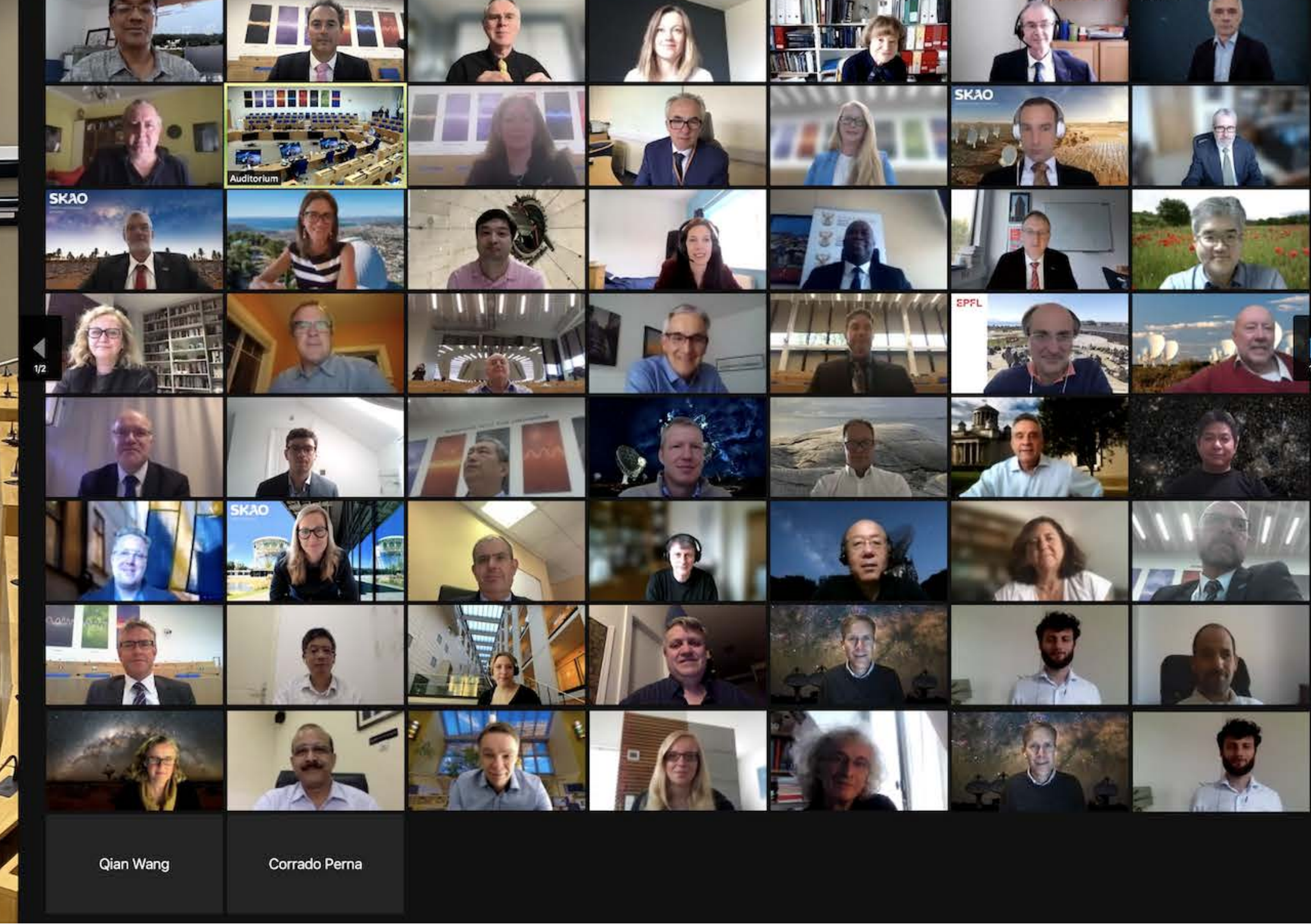
2021-2022: France

- May 2021: Confirmation of intent to join SKAO by President Macron
- Decision by SKAO Council to approve membership of France
- 7th March 2022: signature of cooperation agreement with CNRS
- Permits participation in SKAO while ratification of Convention takes place



11th April 2022





- SKAO Council comprises Members and Observers
- Approach: ensure the broadest possible participation – global scientific collaboration, societal impact and operation as a sustainable 21st Century science organisation



Growing the SKAO as an IGO

- SKAO focus now on construction of SKA1
- Council 'Science and Diplomatic Task Force' now looking at strategy to broaden membership of SKAO
 - Two aims: to broaden the collaboration, and to bring in more resources
- Looking broadly beyond the current membership:
 - Communities in Europe, Asia, South America (and the USA)
 - Also considering the strategy to bring in African partner countries
- Also needing to look at the policy environment – the business case that new Members might need



Conclusions

- Creating the SKAO has been a complex and lengthy process
- Observatory has embedded itself quickly – Council up and running and taken major decisions
- France in SKAO a model example of a community taking a step-wise approach – building engagement
 - France embedded in the organization already – looking forward now to completion of ratification
- Plenty of challenges ahead, but optimistic about delivering!



Thank you.

We recognise and acknowledge the Indigenous peoples and cultures that have traditionally lived on the lands on which our facilities are located.

SKAO

We acknowledge the Wajarri Yamaji people as the traditional owners of the Murchison Radio-astronomy Observatory site.

www.skao.int