135th Meeting of ESO Council
held in Lisbon on 10 and 11 June 2015

Council convened in the following composition:

President
Prof. P Roche

Delegates
Prof. J Alves AT
Dr D Weselka AT
Prof. C Waelkens BE
Dr S Pireaux BE
Prof. W Benz CH
Dr M Steinacher CH
Prof. J Palouš CZ
Dr J Buriánek CZ
Prof. T Henning DE
Dr T Roth DE
Prof. U Jørgensen DK
Ms C Tornøe DK
Mr F Ballestero ES
Dr R Bachiller ES
Dr A Väihkönen FI
Dr L Vigroux FR
Dr D Mourard FR
Prof. G Bignami IT
Dr M Pardo IT
Prof. K Kuijken NL
Dr J van de Donk NL
Prof. P Garcia PT
Dr P Carneiro PT
Dr C Sahlberg SE
Prof. H Olofsson SE
Prof. P Roche UK
Dr C Vincent UK

Apologies
Prof. J Kotilainen FI

Observers
Ms L Wiszczor¹ PL
Prof. M Sama¹ PL

STC Chair
Prof. S Feltzing¹ SE

External Auditors
Mr. Antonio Mira-Crespo¹ PT
Ms Maria da Luz Faria¹ PT
Ms Filomena Rolo¹ PT
Mr. Martins Nuno Lopes¹ PT

Chair ALMA LL Comm
Prof. X Barcons¹

ESO Representatives
Prof. T de Zeeuw, ESO Director General
Ms L Comendador Frutos¹, Head of Cabinet
Mr P Geeraert¹, Director of Administration
Prof. R Ivison¹, Director for Science
Dr A Kaufer¹, Director of Operations
Ms M Peron¹, Director of Engineering
Dr A Russell¹, Director of Programmes
Dr R Tamai¹, E-ELT Programme Manager

Secretariat
Mrs J Wallace¹

¹ Attendance topic related
Public Summary

The 135th meeting of ESO Council was held in Lisbon, Portugal at the generous invitation of the Portuguese delegation, marking 15 years since Portugal’s accession to ESO. All Member States were represented, together with observers from Poland.

Council unanimously approved the draft minutes (open sessions) of the 133rd meeting (document Cou-1586), draft minutes (restricted/closed sessions) of the 133rd meeting (document Cou-1587 conf.) and draft minutes (all sessions) of the 134th extraordinary meeting (document Cou-1604 conf.).

General Reports

Council noted the presentations as given by the President, Prof. Roche and by the Director General, Prof. de Zeeuw, regarding overall aspects of ESO’s activities. Council in particular was pleased by the fact that, in both Poland and Brazil, the Accession Agreements had been approved by the Parliament and Senate, and final signature was now awaited by the respective Presidents to complete the ratification process. Information was also provided from the Strategy Working Group by its Chair, Prof. Waelkens, and the update on new Member States/international relations was given by Ms Comendador Frutos.

Council welcomed confirmation that the Belgian ad-referendum vote in support of embarking on the first phase of the E-ELT project has been lifted, noting that this meant that all Member States were now fully supportive of the E-ELT.

La Silla – Paranal Observatory

Council received presentations on the La Silla - Paranal instrumentation programme, noting the very good progress made in commissioning, acceptance and science operations with the 2nd generation VLT instruments. KMOS, a multi-IFU near-infrared spectroscopic instrument has been granted Provisional Acceptance in Chile (PAC), which essentially means that it is judged to meet the acceptance criteria, whilst MUSE, the wide-field optical multi-unit, wide-field explorer and SPHERE, the high strehl ratio, adaptive optics imager, spectrometer and polarimeter optimised for planet identification continue to perform well as they move towards PAC. All of these instruments are in high demand by the user community.

At the same time, preparations for installation of the 2nd generation VLTI instruments continue. This has required suspension of VLTI operations for 6 months while upgrades are performed and the previous instruments are removed. The first of the 2nd generation VLTI instruments, GRAVITY, a high performance, near-infrared astrometric imager, passed its acceptance review in Europe during the Council meeting and is on track for shipping to Paranal later in 2015. The second instrument, MATISSE, a mid-infrared spectro-imager, is also progressing well.

Council authorised the Director General to sign the contract for the 4MOST wide-field spectroscopic instrument to be constructed for the VISTA telescope. This instrument will conduct spectroscopic surveys of the whole visible sky once delivered in 2020.

In addition, preparations are underway for the installation of ESPRESSO, at the incoherent beam combination port and for the Adaptive Optics Facility (AOF) on UT4. ESPRESSO will provide
unprecedented high stability, high resolution observations at visible wavelengths, while the AOF will provide wide-field (~2 arcmin) adaptive correction using a constellation of laser guide stars; the first of the lasers achieved first light on 29 April.

Following the call for proposals for new instrumentation and operational contributions to the NTT, the STC has recommended that a powerful broad wavelength coverage spectrometer based on design aspects of X-Shooter be constructed for the NTT and a near-infrared, high-stability, high-resolution spectrometer that would complement HARPS be built for the 3.6-m telescope. Council endorsed these recommendations.

All of this activity has to be managed very carefully to ensure timely delivery and maintain the impressive instrumentation programme that has resulted in the suite of capabilities at the VLT/I. The STC and Council continue to pay close attention to the programme.

The unusually bad weather in Northern Chile in March caused substantial losses of observing time and interrupted normal operations, but did not lead to significant damage to the facilities.

ALMA Observatory

The report on ALMA construction was noted. The only substantial ALMA construction activity remaining is the Residencia. Following site preparation, erection of the buildings has now started, with an expectation that the Residencia will be ready for occupancy in the second half of 2016. A report on Lessons Learned from the ALMA Construction Programme was presented by the Panel Chair. Council noted this report which contained a number of important recommendations as the E-ELT construction phase ramps up, and thanked all the participants who had contributed to the review.

ALMA operations continue to produce high quality data that is impacting on many areas of astronomy. Council noted the very high proposal numbers for Cycle 3 of Early Science, demonstrating the enormous demand for ALMA data from the community. Whilst noting the reported improvements in observing efficiency over the last 9 months, Council requested more information on the factors that had produced the gains.

E-ELT Programme

Progress in the European Extremely Large Telescope programme is most visible in the construction of the road to Cerro Armazones and the completion of the platform on the mountaintop, but a great deal of other activity was reported, including the letting of contracts for long delivery time items in the optical train. Following the recommendations from the FC and STC, Council authorised the Director General to sign the contracts for the first set of instruments for the E-ELT. These instruments are:

- MICADO a near-infrared imager with spectroscopic capability
- A multi-conjugate adaptive optics unit, MAORY, which will feed MICADO and can also feed a future instrument
- HARMONI, a 0.5-2.5μm integral field spectrograph together with development of its Laser Tomography Adaptive Optics system to Preliminary Design Review level
- METIS a mid-infrared imager/spectrometer
Council noted that the allocations of Guaranteed Time provided to the instrument consortia may exceed slightly the 15% guideline amounts in the first few years of E-ELT operations, but also recognised that it was imperative to start the first tranche of instruments promptly to ensure that they were available when needed. The construction of these instruments is included within the Phase 1 E-ELT Programme approved by Council in December 2014.

**Science and Technology Committee**

Council noted the report from the Chair of the STC, which included recommendations on E-ELT instruments, ALMA priorities, instrument plans at the La Silla – Paranal Observatory and the Science Prioritization exercise.

The impact of the increasing breadth of the ESO programme was noted by Council and the Director of Science was subsequently asked to discuss the structure and schedule of STC meetings with the STC Chair and Council President to optimise their format.

Council noted the policy that has been established for hosting external facilities on ESO property. They also noted the report on the Science Prioritization exercise, which lays out the challenges facing ESO in the coming years.

**Finance and Administration**

Council noted the report and recommendations from Finance Committee, and approved the Financial Statements for the year 2014.

As recommended by the FC, Council unanimously approved the External Audit Report 2014 including the comments of the Executive and the granting of discharge to the Director General. Council took note of the Procurement Audit Report.

Following discussions at previous Council meetings, a new classification scheme for Council and Finance Committee documents was approved. This will result in greater transparency of decisions and planning at ESO.

**ESA/ESO Cooperation Agreement**

The delegates unanimously authorised the Director General to sign on behalf of ESO the ESA-ESO Cooperation Agreement.

**Retirement of Dr J van de Donk**

This was the last Council meeting for Dr J van de Donk, who has contributed to the ESO Programme for 25 years. Council joined the Director General in thanking Jan for his support and extending their best wishes for the future.

Council thanked the Portuguese delegates for their warm hospitality and efficient organization of the meeting.