

# Statutes of association

## Global Alliance of Assistive Technology Organizations

*Approved: June 24th, 2020*

### **Name and headquarters**

#### **Article 1**

The Global Alliance of Assistive Technology Organizations is a non-profit association governed by the present statutes and, secondly, by Articles 60 et seq. of the Swiss Civil Code. It is neutral politically, and non-denominational.

#### **Article 2**

The Organization's headquarters are located in the Canton of Geneva in 81 Av. Louis Casai, 1216 Cointrin, Switzerland.

The Association shall be of unlimited duration.

### **Aims**

#### **Article 3**

The Association shall pursue the following aims:

- to advance at global level the field of assistive technology (AT) and rehabilitation engineering (RE) to benefit people with disabilities and functional limitations of all ages;
- to foster equitable and reliable access to assistive technology and rehabilitation for all people in the world that might benefit from it;
- to promote at global level research, policy advocacy, education and training, communication and information provision, knowledge exchange;
- to foster collaboration among the members and with supranational and international organisations and organisations having similar or complementary goals;
- to support assistive technology professional organisations in low- and middle-income countries.

To reach these goals the Association may develop activities of scientific, educational, medical, social, humanitarian, promotional and advocative nature in all parts of the world.

### **Resources**

#### **Article 4**

The Association's resources are derived from:

- membership fees;
- donations and legacies;
- sponsorship;
- public subsidies and grants;
- any other resources authorized by the law.

The funds shall be used in accordance with the Association's social aims.

## **Members**

### **Article 5**

Membership is open to legally established membership organisations that recognize the role of Assistive technology (AT) and/or Rehabilitation engineering (RE) in improving the quality of life and well-being for people, in particular, people with disability or those who are aging.

The Association comprises:

- Full member organisations
- Candidate member organisations
- Affiliate organisations

**Full membership** is open to organisations that can demonstrate the following characteristics:

- AT/RE is their main area of interest.
- They have an explicit not-for-profit interest in advancing AT/RE.
- They are membership organisations themselves; members may be individual AT professionals or independent institutions/organisations with interests in AT/RE from industry, services, research, academia, consumers of technology, national or international funders, or a mixture of these.
- They have at least 50 registered and voting members.
- They have an elected board that administers the organisation.
- They have a minimum of activities going on (e.g. training activities, conferences, publications, other member services)
- They represent AT/RE interests nationally, regionally, or globally to decision-making bodies, etc.

Full member organisations have voting rights at the General Assembly and can candidate members for the Board of Directors.

**Candidate Member Organisation** status is open to organisations that have the ambition to become full member organisations but that do not meet all the criteria for full membership yet. Candidate-member organisations do not have voting rights at the General Assembly.

**Affiliate Organisation** status is open to any interested membership organisation that conducts activities surrounding AT/RE, even if these are secondary to other activities, or commercial in nature. Affiliate members do not have voting rights at the General Assembly.

Requests to join GAATO under any of these forms must be addressed to the Board but approved by the General Assembly.

All members are subject to the payment of an annual fee.

Membership ceases:

- By written resignation thereby notifying the Board at least six months before the end of the financial year;
- By exclusion ordered by the Board, for just cause, with a right of appeal to the General Assembly. Appeals must be lodged within 30 days of the Board's decision being notified;
- For non-payment of dues for more than one year.

In all cases the membership fee for the current year remains due. Members who have resigned or who are excluded have no rights to any part of the Association's assets.

Only the Association's assets may be used for obligations/commitments contracted in its name. Members have no personal liability.

## **Organs**

### **Article 6**

The Association shall include the following organs:

- General Assembly
- Board of directors
- Auditors
- Secretariat

## **General Assembly**

### **Article 7**

The General Assembly is the Association's supreme authority. It is composed of all the members who can participate with more than one delegate. Each full member has one vote. Full members will need to indicate three days before the Assembly which of their delegates will exercise the full member's voting rights.

It shall hold an Ordinary Meeting once each year. It may also hold an extraordinary session whenever necessary, at the request of the Board or at least of one-fifth of its full members.

The General Assembly shall be considered valid if at least 25% of the members are present.

The Board shall inform the members in writing of the date of the General Assembly at least six weeks in advance. The notification, including the proposed agenda, shall be sent to each member at least 7 days prior to the date of the meeting.

It is possible for members to attend remotely or to be represented by another member with the same membership rights.

Also Candidate Member Organisations and Affiliate Organisations can attend the General Assembly but they don't have voting rights.

### **Article 8**

The General Assembly:

- Approves the admission and expulsion of members;
- Appoints the Board of directors
- Approves the contents of the reports and financial statements for the year;
- Approves the annual budget;
- Oversees the activity of other organs, which it may dismiss, stating the grounds therefore;
- Appoints an auditor for the Organization's accounts;
- Decides on any modification of statutes;
- Approves bylaws, internal rules and any modifications in them;
- Decides on the dissolution of the Association.

### **Article 9**

The General Assembly is presided over by the President, or in his or her absence, by any other member of the Board.

### **Article 10**

Decisions of the General Assembly shall be taken by a majority vote of the full members present. In case of deadlock, the President shall have the casting vote.

Decisions concerning the amendment of the Statutes and the dissolution of the Association must be approved by a two-third majority of the full members present.

### **Article 11**

Votes are by a show of hands, or if the meeting is virtual, by notification in chat . Voting can also take place by secret ballot, if the majority of the full members present request it.

Full members that cannot attend physically the General Assembly may vote remotely by electronic means.

### **Article 12**

The agenda of the ordinary annual session of the General Assembly must include:

- Approval of the Minutes of the previous General Assembly
- Approval of the Board's annual Activity Report

- Approval of the report of the Treasurer and of the Auditor
- Approval of the budget
- Approval of reports and accounts
- Appointment of auditors
- Appointment of Board members, if the term has come to an end.
- Miscellaneous business

## **Board of directors**

### **Article 13**

The Board is authorized to carry out all acts that further the purposes of the Association. It has the most extensive powers to manage the Association's day-to-day affairs, including the appointment of staff and the nomination of representatives.

### **Article 14**

The Board is composed of at least 5 members appointed by the General Assembly.

Members of the Board that are appointed by the General Assembly should be members of good standing of any of the full member organisations.

The appointed Board members will assign the roles of President, Secretary and Treasurer from among themselves.

The Board may decide to co-opt up to 2 additional members to the Board to majorly reflect global geographical representation, competency areas, or gender representation. Co-opted members do not necessarily have to be a member of any of the full member organisations.

At least one member of the Board, either elected or co-opted, will be a Swiss resident.

Each member's term of office shall last for 3 years and is renewable as a consecutive term 1 time for a maximum of 6 years.

The Board meets as often as the Association's business requires.

The Board may decide to nominate among its members an Executive Committee for the daily governance of the organisation defining its areas of authority.

### **Article 15**

The Board members work on a volunteer basis and as such can only be reimbursed for their actual expenses and travel costs. For activities beyond the usual board function, each Board member is eligible for appropriate compensation. To avoid conflict of interest, board members cannot be involved with deciding funding for themselves or their organizations.

### **Article 16**

The functions of the Board are:

- to take the appropriate measures to achieve the goals of the Association;
- to establish the membership fees;
- to convene the ordinary and extraordinary General Assemblies;
- to ensure that Statutes are applied, to draft rules of procedure and bylaws, and to administer the assets of the Association.

## **Auditor**

### **Article 17**

Each year the General Assembly appoints two auditors. It may also entrust this task to an external auditor.

The auditors shall check the operating and annual accounts prepared by the Board and present a written and detailed report to the annual ordinary General Assembly.

## **Secretariat**

### **Article 18**

The Board may establish a Secretariat and employ a Secretary-General, to be in charge of the management of the Association.

The Secretary General, in consultation with the Board, and in line with the approved program and budget of the Association, may hire other staff to assist in fulfilling the mission of the Association.

The Secretary-General shall administer the affairs of the Association and represent the Association vis-à-vis third parties in accordance with organizational rules and policies established in consultation with the Board, including (joint) signatory powers.

The Secretary-General is expected to attend, without voting rights, all meetings of the General Assembly and Board.

## **Signature and representation**

### **Article 19**

The Board is responsible for granting signatory powers. Signatory powers may be granted to natural persons, irrespective of whether or not such persons are board members. Signatories may hold sole or joint signatory power (2 or more signatures required) for the association.

At any time, the Board can decide to change the attribution of signatory power.

## **Various provisions**

### **Article 20**

The financial year shall begin on 1 January and end on 31 December of each year.

**Article 21**

The liability of the association is limited to its own assets and members do not have a liability for the association's debt.

**Article 22**

Should the Association be dissolved, the available assets should be transferred to a non-profit organization pursuing public interest goals similar to those of the Association and likewise benefiting from tax exemption. Under no circumstances should the assets be returned to the founders or members. Nor should they use a part or a total of assets for their own benefit.

The present Statutes have been approved by the Constitutive Assembly of June the 24th, 2020 at Geneva.



Chair of the Constituent Assembly

Evert-Jan Hoogerwerf



Co-Chair of the Constituent Assembly

Roger O. Smith

