

AN AFRICAN FIRST

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Abstract— The first conference of the Federation of African Medical Physics Organizations (FAMPO) was held in Marrakech, Morocco, from 10 – 12 November 2022.

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The first conference of the Federation of African Medical Physics Organizations (FAMPO) was held in Marrakech, Morocco, from 10 – 12 November 2022. The conference was hosted by the Moroccan Association for Medical Physics, with substantial local support.

The objective of the conference was to provide a platform for the exchange and sharing of scientific ideas and experiences in all aspects of the profession – hence the broad theme of the conference “From Imaging to Treatment” was chosen to be as inclusive as possible. The conference was meant to happen in 2019 already, but had to be postponed. Virtual conference options were rejected in favour of a first meeting that would be in-person.

The opening ceremony was attended by the presidents of Mohammed V and Cadi Ayyad Universities in Morocco, who signed a memorandum of understanding at that time. In addition, the Director of the National Graduate School of Arts and Crafts, the Director of the National Centre for

Energy Sciences and Nuclear Techniques, and selected members of FAMPO ExCom, led by the president, were also present. The local team, under the chairmanship of Lakbir El Hamidi, as well as the co-chair, Asma Chaik, worked hard to make the conference a success.

The conference consisted of a combination of plenary sessions, teaching lectures, oral and poster presentations, as well as vendor workshops. The venue – Complexe Administratif et Culturel, Mohammed VI – was spectacular, showcasing exquisite architecture and fine mosaic patterns.

Conference attendance was excellent, the official number provided by the conference organizers was 268. The International Atomic Energy Agency has invested quite heavily in medical physics in Africa and supported this conference as well. The American Association of Physicists in Medicine had representatives from the Global Representatives Subcommittee and the Global Medical Physics Education and Training Committee who attended

the conference, and Medical Physics for World Benefit also had a speaker at the conference.



The conference venue

The International Organization for Medical Physics, who supported the conference from even before the pandemic, were very glad that the conference was finally re-instated.

One of the challenges of hosting a regional conference in Africa is that many participants must leave Africa, to get back into Africa to attend. Flight routes are not back to pre-Covid levels yet. With this in mind, it was extremely encouraging to see the number of Moroccan participants who came from all over the country to participate in the meeting; especially students and young professionals took advantage of this opportunity. It was the aim of the Moroccan association to use this conference as a springboard for the profession, and by all accounts this could very well be the case. The conference even made national news on television.

Invited speakers gave fantastic talks on topics ranging from machine learning in nuclear medicine to the importance of audits for innovative radiotherapy techniques, from hypofractionated treatments and stereotactic radiotherapy to 50 years of the IAEA postal dose audit results, from quantification challenges in PET/CT to diagnostic reference levels, or from new horizons in multimodality imaging technology to a novel model for medical physics education. Collaboration avenues were explored and discussed, professional networks were built and expanded. This was very motivating!

Participants engaged with vendors, who made many new contacts.

While many lessons were learnt from an organizational perspective, it is fair to say that the conference was well-received and enjoyed. Perhaps in future an additional day or

more parallel sessions are required for more African research to be presented.

The Moroccan gastronomy was relished, and the sights and sounds of Morocco were savoured.



Poster describing the IOMP



Conference banner

The vision and purpose of FAMPO include the promotion of the medical physics profession and related activities, the advancement of the status of the profession, the promotion of research and development in the field, to organize regional or international conferences and meetings, as the collaboration with other scientific organizations. This conference provided an avenue to promote all these aspects.

No decision has been taken yet on where or when the next FAMPO conference will be held. It remains a challenge to make activities like this sustainable in Africa. A FAMPO conference is more likely to succeed if there is substantial local buy-in, which already poses a problem in most countries in Africa, who lack a critical mass of medical physicists to start off with. No virtual attendance was offered in the first edition of the FAMPO conference, but hybrid conference options seem to be the new normal and certainly offer a convenient way to listen to talks, even

if the networking aspects and vendor engagement suffer. One solution may be to explore closer collaborations with other regional organizations to host an inter-regional conference.

Whatever will be decided, we look forward to meeting you at the next FAMPO conference!

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The first FAMPO conference