



CONSTITUTION
OF THE
SOCIETY OF NIGERIA
THEATRE ARTISTS (SONTA)





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PREAMBLE

WE, THE MEMBERS of the SOCIETY OF NIGERIA THEATRE ARTISTS, herein thereafter referred to as SONTA

HAVING firmly and solemnly resolved:

TO COLLABORATE in the spirit of mutual respect, collective advancement, professional discipline, academic and artistic freedom

AND TO protect the artistic talents, rights and privileges of theatre, culture workers and performing Artists in Nigeria

DO HEREBY MAKE, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES the following Constitution:

ARTICLE 1: GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. Supremacy of the Constitution.

- (a) This constitution is supreme and its provisions shall have binding force on all SONTA Members.
- (b) If any other guideline, rule or statute, besides the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which conflict with this constitution, the provisions of this constitution shall prevail, and the other guideline, rule or statute shall, to the extent of its inconsistency be void.

2. Interpretation

The SONTA COUNCIL shall have the supreme power to interpret in precise terms any controversial aspect of this constitution and shall rule on all matters in which this constitution is silent.

3. National Secretariat

- (a) The National Secretariat shall be located in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja and in the event of the non-completion of the National Secretariat, the SONTA branch where the President (or in exceptional cases with the approval of the congress, where the Secretary-General) is domiciled shall host the interim National Secretariat.
- (b) The Secretary shall at all times inform the President and stakeholders of the Society on all developments and correspondences in the secretariat.

4. Functions of the SONTA National Secretariat

- (a) The secretariat shall make the day-to-day running of SONTA easier, vibrant and effective by keeping adequate records
- (b) It shall provide a sense of belonging to all members by serving as a rallying point for all stakeholders at all times
- (c) It shall serve as meeting point for both the Executive Committee and the Council
- (d) It shall serve as a warehouse where key SONTA documents are stored and where major projects are coordinated

5. Amendment

- (a) The constitution or any section(s) thereafter shall be amended only after 2/3 majority of the congress members present at a properly constituted meeting of the congress vote in favour of such amendment and such amendments shall be communicated to the Council. Thereafter it shall be the duty of the Secretary-General in consultation with the legal adviser to incorporate such amendments into the constitution for posterity.

6. Motto

- (a) Motto

The Motto of the Association shall be known and called “Creativity and Research for Development.”

7. Vision

The Vision of the Association is “to become a definitive arrowhead in theatre research, training and practice within the Nigerian creative industries”

8. Mission Statement

The Association's mission therefore is “to foster high standards for theatre scholarship and professionalism through research and networking with established theatre and creative economy teams/organisations globally”

ARTICLE 2: MEMBERSHIP

2. Categories of membership
 - (1) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, persons admitted into membership of SONTA can be registered as either:
 - (a) Fellows; or
 - (b) Life Members; or
 - (c) Members; or
 - (d) Associates; or
 - (e) Students; or
 - (f) Affiliate/honorary members; or
 - (g) Corporate members.
 - (2) A person admitted as a member of SONTA shall be entitled to be registered as -
 - (a) a fellow if:
 - (i) (s)he is at least thirty-five years of age, a trained performing artists and has had not less than fifteen years relevant professional working experience, at least five of which must have been in positions of managerial responsibility;
 - (ii) his/her professional activities and achievements justify his acceptance as an authority in the profession;
 - (iii) (s)he is otherwise considered by the Council to be a fit and proper person to be so recognised;

(iv) his/her application in that behalf is sponsored in writing and in such manner as the Council may, from time to time, prescribe by two fellows;

(b) A Life member if:

(i) his/her professional activities and achievements justify his acceptance as an authority in the profession;

(ii) s(he) is otherwise not domiciled in Nigeria but supportive of SONTA and its programmes

(iii) (s)he is otherwise considered by the Council to be a fit and proper person to be so recognised;

(iv) his/her application in that behalf is sponsored in writing and in such manner as the Council may, from time to time, prescribe by two fellows;

(c) A member if:

(i) (s)he is at least twenty-five years of age and has had not less than five years relevant professional working experience and (s)he is the holder of a certificate from any institution recognized by the Council;

(ii) (s)he is otherwise considered by the Council to be a fit and proper person to be so registered;

(iii) his/her application in that behalf is sponsored in such manner as the council may, from time to time, prescribe by two full members or by one fellow

(iv) provided that the Council shall have power, from time to time, in its discretion to waive the requirement of age specified in sub-paragraph (i) of this paragraph;

- (d) An associate if:
- (i) (s)he is at least twenty years of age and has had not less than two years relevant professional working experience, and he is the holder of a certificate from any institution recognized by the Council;
 - (ii) (s)he is otherwise considered by the Council to be a fit and proper person to be so registered;
 - (iii) provided that the Council shall have power, from time to time, in its discretion to waive the requirement of age specified in sub-paragraph (i) of this paragraph;
- (e) a student if (s)he is undergoing a course of study in Theatre Arts in any of the institutions recognised for that purpose by the Council; and
- (f) an affiliate/honorary member if:
- i. (s)he is a person having an interest in Theatre Arts,
 - ii. has been so admitted as such by a resolution of the Council or
 - iii. (s)he practices Theatre Arts but lacks requisite qualification to back it.
- (g) A corporate member if it is an establishment that has as its primary duty the teaching or research in the Theatre Arts or has in its employment not less than five performing artists who earn their living through such performances.
- (3) The designatory letters of the:

(a) Fellow of the Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists shall be "FSONTA"

(b) Life Member/ Member of the Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists shall be "MSONTA";

(c) Associate of the Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists shall be "ASONTA"

(d) Affiliate/Honorary Member of the Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists shall be "SONTA"

(e) Holder of any professional recognition on the SONTA Hall of Fame other than Fellow of the Association shall be "HSONTA"

ARTICLE 3: SOURCES OF FUNDING

The activities of the Society shall be financed in the following ways:

i. Membership Dues

This shall be fixed by the National Executive Committee as it deems fit. The same is true of institutional fees, as well as other charges of the Society. Membership dues shall be payable as may be specified from time to time by the executive committee of the society.

ii. Endowment and Donations

iii. Grants from Ministries, foundations, and parastatals.

iv. Proceeds from investments or activities of the Society.

ARTICLE 4: OFFICERS

SONTA shall have the following officers:

- (a) President who shall be the chief executive officer of the Society. He shall serve for a term of up to two years. He may be re-elected for another term of two years. Any holder of this office must have been a member of the Society for a minimum period of fifteen years and must have served the Society in other capacities in the executive committee for at least four years before his/her election
- (b) Two vice presidents who shall serve for a term of two years, and seek re-election for another term of two years. Any holder of this office must have been a member of the Society for a minimum period of twelve years and must have served the Society in other capacities in the executive committee for at least four years before his/her election.
- (c) Their titles are as follows:
 - 1st Vice President shall be for administration and policy
 - 2nd Vice President shall be for programmes and projects
- (d) Secretary-General who shall be elected for a term of two years. He shall perform the duties appropriate to that office. He should as much as is possible be geographically close to the National Secretariat of SONTA. Nothing in this constitution bars a branch to

- host the position of President and the Secretary simultaneously.
Any holder of this office must have been a member of the Society for a minimum period of ten years and must have served the Society in other capacities in the executive committee for at least two years before his/her election
- (e) Financial Secretary who shall be elected for a term of two years. He shall perform the duties pertaining to that office. Any aspirant to this office must have been a member of the Society for a minimum period of ten years and must have served the Society in other capacities in the executive committee for at least two years before his/her election.
 - (f) Treasurer who shall be elected for a term of two years who shall perform the duties pertaining to that office. Any aspirant to this office must have been a member of the Society for a minimum period of ten years and must have served the Society in other capacities in the executive committee for at least two years before his/her election.
 - (g) Public Relations Officer who shall be elected for a term of two years. He shall perform the duties pertaining to publicity, protocol and initiate programmes that can promote co-existence between the constituent publics of SONTA.
 - (h) Events Manager who shall be elected for a term of two years. He shall handle all duties that pertain to welfare of members. He is the key events organiser for SONTA as assigned by the president

- (i) Assistant Secretary: who shall be elected for a term of two years. He shall assist the secretary in the discharge of his duties and act on his behalf when directed or in the absence of the latter. He shall also perform the duties pertaining to the function of a provost marshal at meetings.
- (j) SONTA Journals Editor who shall be elected for a term of two years. He shall edit and publish all journals of the society and shall perform all other duties appropriate to the office of editor of academic journal?. Any holder of this office must have a doctorate degree and proven record of research productivity.
- (k) Two ex-officio members who must have held principal offices in the immediate past executive committee

ARTICLE 5: DUTIES OF OFFICERS

- (a) The president shall:
 - i. Preside over all meetings of the Society;
 - ii. Provide general leadership and preside over the day to day administration of SONTA
 - iii. Call and preside over meetings of the Executive Committee;
 - iv. Appoint Committees except those for which other provision is made by this constitution
 - v. Delegate such responsibilities as (s)he sees fit and where such delegation is in the best interest of the Society.

- vi. Be an ex-officio and non-voting member of the Executive Committee after leaving office.
- vii. Represent the Society in dealing with other organizations and all other major functions
- viii. Be a signatory to the account of the Society
- ix. Carry out such other duties pertaining to the office of the President.
- x. Be the principal accounting officer of the Society.

(b) The Vice Presidents:

There shall be two Vice Presidents designated First Vice President (in charge of administration and policy) and Second Vice President (in charge of programmes & projects). The general responsibilities of the two vice presidents shall be:

- i. Assist the President in the performance of his/her duties and perform these duties in case of the absence or disability of the President. (S)He shall be voted by congress or in exceptional circumstances, the Council to replace the president by reason of the president's long absence, disability or death.
- ii. Handle any of the following administrative responsibilities as assigned by the President or Council without prejudice to any additional responsibilities that the congress may assign to either of them from time to time.
- iii. The specific responsibilities of the first vice president shall be:

- (a) Zonal activities
- (b) Membership
- (c) Internal coordination of divisional relationships
- iv. The specific responsibilities of the second vice president shall be:
 - (d) Oversee Funding, grants, scholarship awards including all programmes, projects & official functions as directed by the president
 - (e) Oversee all research activities of SONTA on the presidents instruction
 - (f) Relationships with other organizations, affiliations, grants etc
- (c) The Secretary-General Shall:
 - i. Serve as secretary to the Congress, Council and to the Executive Committee and prepare the agenda for their meetings.
 - ii. Notify all members of the Society of special and Annual General Meeting and record the minutes or proceedings thereof.
 - iii. Maintain an up-to-date record of registered members
 - iv. Keep and file all records in the corporate record book.

v. Be custodian of and be responsible for the seal of the Society.

vi. Perform for and on behalf of the Society any other duties as may be assigned to him from time to time.

(d) The Financial Secretary shall:

i. Collect annual dues from members.

ii. Hand over all monies collected to the Treasurer within seventy-two (72) hours for banking

iii. Be the chairman of the finance committee

iv. Perform for and on behalf of the Society any other duties as may be assigned to him from time to time.

(e) The Treasurer Shall:

i. Keep or cause to be kept, full and accurate records of the accounts of the Society

ii. Receive all monies due to the society and bank within forty-eight (48) hours of receipt

iii. Be a signatory to the account of the Society.

iv. Disburse or cause to be disbursed, the funds of the Society as approved by the President

v. Render to the Society at the Annual Business Meeting (and at other times as may be determined by the Executive Committee or Council) a fully written report of all transactions of the Treasurer and of the financial position of the Society.

vi. Execute or cause to be executed all contracts entered into by the Society, in line with the directive of the President

(f) The Public Relations Officer

i. Publicise the legitimate activities of the Society

ii. Oversee the news publications of the Society

iii. Assist the President in managing the corporate image of SONTA through various public relations activities as directed by the President

iv. Handle the organization of courtesy calls, press relations, and advertising and public relations functions of SONTA

v. Assist the Social Secretary in organizing important activities of the Society.

vi. Performed any other duties that may be assigned to him from time to time by the President

(g) The Event Manager shall:

i. Organize all social activities of the Society.

ii. See to the welfare of members during conventions, conferences, symposia, meetings.

iii. Perform any other duties that may be assigned to him from time to time by the President.

(h) Assistant Secretary shall:

i. assist the secretary in the discharge of his duties and act on his behalf in the absence of the latter.

- ii. shall also perform the duties pertaining to the functions of a provost marshal at meetings.
- (i) The SONTA Journals Editor Shall:
 - i. Oversee the publication of the Nigeria Theatre Journal and any other journal of the Society.
 - ii. Be assisted by an editorial board appointed by the congress.
- (j) Ex-officio Members shall:
 - i. Advise the President in the effective discharge of his functions
 - ii. Serve as auditors of the Society's account(s) and present a verified audit report to the congress at the expiration of the tenure of an executive committee
 - iii. Perform any other duties that may be assigned to them from time to time by the President/Council.

ARTICLE 6: ORGANS OF THE SOCIETY

The organs of the Society shall be: the SONTA Congress, the SONTA Executive Committee, and the SONTA Council

- (a) The Executive Committee shall:
 - i. be responsible for formulating and executing all policies of SONTA as approved by the congress or the Council
 - ii. It shall, through the President, act for the congress when it is not possible to convene a meeting of the congress before decision is taken on any issue.

However, any action taken under this authority is subject to review by the congress at its next meeting

iii. be composed of the President, the two Vice-Presidents, the Secretary-General, the Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Publicity Secretary, Event Manager, Assistant Secretary, the two ex-officio members and SONTA Journals Editor

iv. shall meet as regularly as summoned by either the President but the frequency of its meeting shall NOT be less than THREE times in any calendar year.

(b) The SONTA Council shall:

i. Comprise all Trustees, Fellows and serving President of SONTA

ii. Be responsible for the consideration of all nominations for honours and awards of SONTA

iii. The serving Secretary-General shall be the secretary of the SONTA Council

iv. Be the custodians of all the properties of the society

v. have power to borrow or to dispose of any property and shall have power to pay remuneration (including pensions), allowances or expenses to any employee of the Council or any other person in accordance with scales approved by the Congress

vi. Be the final interpreter of any portion of this constitution in terms of crisis

vii. The decision of the Council can only be subject of review after a motion supported by 2/3 of the congress is passed successfully.

(c) The SONTA Congress

i. is the highest decision making body of SONTA

ii. comprise all financially up-to-date registered members of SONTA attending a proper meeting

iii. shall meet minimum once in a year

ARTICLE 7: SONTA AWARDS

The statutory SONTA Awards shall be:

(a) SONTA TRUSTEES (Maximum of SEVEN trustees have been appointed. To be filled only when there is a vacancy. Must have served in the SONTA Executive Committee previously and a distinguished public figure). Conferment of this honour is Subject to confirmation by the Congress after nomination by SONTA Council.

(b) SONTA FELLOW (strictly for SONTA members with distinguished service to the Society. This is the highest professional recognition a member can attain. A maximum of THREE fellows ONLY can be installed annually). Conferment of this award is Subject to confirmation by the Council

(c) SONTA DISTINGUISHED LEADERSHIP AWARD (Reserved for any theatre professional or friend of the

theatre who has distinguished himself as a leader in any sphere of human existence. A Maximum of THREE of such Awards can be granted annually). Conferment of this award is Subject to ratification by the Council after nomination by Executive committee.

(d) SONTA LIFE TIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD (strictly for theatre professionals who have made cognate contributions to the development of the Arts). A Maximum of TEN of such Awards can be granted annually). Conferment of this award is Subject to ratification by the Council after nomination by Executive committee.

(e) SPECIAL AWARDS (the Executive Committee is at liberty to create special awards to reward individuals from any sphere of human endeavour who have excelled in their fields and are lending support to the Society. These include awards like: best publisher of the year, arts patron, excellence in leadership award, pillar of the arts award, etc. These are however subject to ratification by the congress).

ARTICLE 8: EDITORIAL BOARD

There shall be a special committee of SONTA which shall oversee all academic Journal publications of the Society

- (a) The Editorial Board shall report to the Executive Committee through the SONTA Journals Editor
- (b) Nothing in this constitution prevents the President acting on behalf of the Executive Committee from authorizing the publication or collaboration with any

reputable organization on a special publication or book project which in his/her opinion advances the goals of SONTA

- (c) The membership of the Editorial Board shall consist of:
- i. The Editor (Chairman) who shall be appointed by the congress during an election year, at the Annual General Meeting of the Society.
 - ii. The Assistant Editor and Business Managers shall be appointed at the Annual General meeting in an election year.
 - iii. The Editor shall hold office for a term of two years and shall be eligible for re-election for a subsequent term of two years. The Assistant Editor, and Business Managers shall also hold office for a term of two years and may not seek re-election into the same position after two terms, unless he/she waits for another term to elapse after his/her second term.

ARTICLE 9: ESTABLISHMENT OF BRANCHES AND CHAPTERS

(a) BRANCHES

There shall be a branch of the Society in every State. The minimum number of people forming a state branch shall be not less than twelve. Each branch shall have its own executive and shall conduct its activities in accordance with this constitution (SONTA).

(b) CHAPTERS

There shall be chapters that are operational units within a state branch organized for the purpose of furthering the aims of the SONTA within affiliate institutions or organizations. To qualify as a chapter, the total membership must reach at least five people who are in full time employment in that institution as teachers or performing artists for at least three years. The chapter must apply to the national secretariat through the nearest Branch or chapter, if any, for recognition, once it is formed. Each chapter shall have its own executive and conduct its elections and other activities in line with this constitution.

ARTICLE 10: EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND AFFILIATIONS

- a) The Society shall cooperate with similar organizations at the local, national and international levels to foster the aims and objectives of the Society
- b) Similarly, the Executive Committee shall on behalf of congress seek and enter into mutually beneficial affiliations with organizations which share similar aims and objectives with SONTA provided such organizations have been in effective operation for at least five years.
- c) The terms of each affiliation shall be agreed upon by the executives of both organizations. Such affiliation must be ratified by congress at its next meeting.
- d) The terms of affiliation shall provide for maximum opportunity for the exchange of communication, services and responsibilities

ARTICLE 11: MINUTES

A reasonable detailed record of the proceedings of the meetings of the statutory organs of the Society, branches and chapters and other committees of SONTA shall be prepared by the Secretaries of the various bodies with copies filed with the National Secretary of the Society, when such minutes are from the zones or the States or six, whichever is less.

ARTICLE 12: QUORUM

The quorum for any meeting of SONTA congress shall be twenty percent (20%) of all registered full members or twenty-five members drawn from atleast ten branches, whichever is less. For the Council and Executive Committee meetings, the quorum shall be fifty percent (50%) of members.

ARTICLE 13: VOTING PROCEDURE

- i. Only individual and institutional members who have fulfilled their financial obligations to the Society shall be eligible to vote and be voted for.
- ii. Voting shall be by secret ballot unless directed otherwise by a simple majority of congress at a duly constituted meeting
- iii. The winner shall be decided by simple majority
- iv. Motions shall be carried by a simple majority of those present and are voting.
- v. Associate, affiliate and honorary members shall have no voting rights

ARTICLE 14: FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

- a) The Executive Committee shall keep proper accounts in respect of each year and proper records in relation to those accounts and shall cause its accounts to be audited within three months to the end of its tenure in accordance with existing guidelines supplied by the congress and or the Auditor-General of the Federation.
- b) Funds of the Society shall be deposited with any reputable bank to be chosen by the Executive Committee. All cheques are signed jointly by the President and either the Financial Secretary or the Treasurer who are co-trustees to the Society's account.

ARTICLE 15: DISCIPLINE

There shall be a Disciplinary Committee to recommend to the Executive Committee appropriate measures to be taken against any member found guilty of violating the rules and regulations of the Society.

- i. At any meeting of the Disciplinary Committee three members shall form a quorum.
- ii. The Chairman shall preside at any meeting of the Disciplinary Committee.
- iii. Any question proposed for decision by the Disciplinary Committee shall be determined by the majority of the members present and voting at a meeting of the Disciplinary Committee at which a quorum is present.

- iv. At all meetings of the Disciplinary Committee each member present shall have one vote on a question proposed for decision by the Disciplinary Committee and, in the event of an equality of votes, the Chairman shall have in addition to a deliberative vote, a casting vote.

ARTICLE 16: REMOVAL OF OFFICERS AND APPOINTEES

Any officer or appointee may be removed from his/her office by the organ of the Society which elected or appointed him under the same voting requirement which were in effect during his election or appointment. The officer must have breached the oath of office, as a result of corruption, ineptitude and any other gross misconduct. The congress shall be the final arbiter with regards to all cases of removal of elected officers.

ARTICLE 17: WINDING UP OF THE SOCIETY

- a) The Society is established for an unlimited period. It shall cease to function when, for any reason, three quarters of the members shall express in writing to the SONTA Council the desire to dissolve it. In this event, the Sonta Council shall notify the Trustees who will take final decision on the dissolution.
- b) In the event of approval of the dissolution by the SONTA Council, directives from the council shall include what is to be done to the assets of the society.

In the event of no clear directive from the Council, any remaining funds and assets shall be given to organisations pursuing similar aims, to the publication of works of theatre research or similar objectives.

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