

*The Constitution of the West African Linguistic Society (WALS)*

**THE CONSTITUTION OF THE WEST  
AFRICAN LINGUISTIC SOCIETY (WALS)**

**La Constitution de la Société de l'Afrique de  
l'Ouest (SLAO)**

## **THE CONSTITUTION OF THE WEST AFRICAN LINGUISTIC SOCIETY**

Amended by the Business Committee of the Thirty-third (33)  
West African Languages Congress in Accra, October 26, 2023

### **ARTICLE 1 - NAME**

An international scholarly association is hereby constituted under the name of the **WEST AFRICAN LINGUISTIC SOCIETY (WALS)**

### **ARTICLE 2 - WORKING LANGUAGES**

The working languages of WALS shall be English, French and any African languages spoken in the West African sub-region.

### **ARTICLE 3 - AIMS**

The aims of the WALS shall be:

- (i) to offer membership to and ensure permanent contact among all who are engaged in the scholarly study of the languages of West Africa, of their literatures, cultures and of any other linguistic aspects of the area;
- (ii) to initiate, encourage and support scholarly research in this field, both for scientific purposes and to assist African nations with the linguistic aspects of their educational and social development;

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- (iii) to organise such regular meetings, conferences or congresses as may be though desirable from time to time, and at least once a year if possible;
- (iv) to publish and assist the publication of the results of scholarly research in this field;
- (v) to offer grants for research in this field, whenever practicable and desirable;
- (vi) to establish association or affiliation with any other recognised scholarly associations, regional or international bodies as may seem desirable, and in particular with African political and economic institutions likely to support the Society to reach its objectives as well as the International Council for Philosophy and the Humanistic Sciences, thereby entering into official relationship with them.

**ARTICLE 4 - MEMBERSHIP**

Membership of the Society shall be of three categories: Honorary Membership; Full Membership and Associate Membership.

- (i) Honorary membership shall be conferred by action of the Council with consent of the full members in Congress assembled. Honorary membership is conferred on a member of the Society who has distinguished himself/herself not only by the acknowledged quality of his/her research, but also by his/her outstanding contribution to the life of the Society.

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- (ii) The members of the Council shall include senior researchers, as well as the Presidents of Linguistic Associations of their respective countries. Members from countries where there is no association of linguists and who regularly fulfil their obligations to the association may be co-opted as members of the Council with the obligation to work towards the establishment of such an association in their country. The Council may also welcome one representative from any African regional institution who is a stakeholder in the mission assigned to the Society. However, such a representative shall not interfere nor work against the interests of the Society.
- (iii) Full membership shall entitle members to voting rights on regular payment of their annual membership dues. Those holding academic positions in tertiary institutions, research institutes, or establishment's equivalent in status, shall be entitled to membership of the Society. Application for membership thereafter must be sponsored by two members of the Society who have paid their annual dues up-to-date.
- (iii) Associate membership shall be initiated by application to the Secretary, accompanied by evidence of genuine interest in African language studies. Such an application shall be sponsored by two members of the Society who have paid their annual dues up-to-date. Associate membership shall entitle the member to attend congress or other open meetings of the Society. Associate members shall not be entitled to vote or be voted for. An Associate member shall be free to bring his/her research and funding networks to the Society.

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Institutional membership shall be considered and approved by Council.

**ARTICLE 5 - ORGANISATION**

- (i) The activities of the Society shall be governed by a Council, to be elected to serve for two congresses. Elections to Council will therefore be held at every other Congress. The Council shall consist of the President, the Vice-President, the Secretary, the Treasurer, Presidents of Country Linguistic Associations and 8 (eight) other elders of the Society.

A Council member who misses two consecutive Congresses shall forfeit his/her membership of Council and may not be eligible for re-election.

- (ii) In no case shall more than two Council members come from the same university or institution of learning or research institute. Not more than three members shall come from the same country. The majority of the Council shall consist of members of the Society who are attached to West African institutions of higher learning and/or representatives from African political and economic institutions who are stakeholders in the mission of the Society.

- (iii) The Council shall meet at least once a year.

**ARTICLE 5 - THE EXECUTIVE OF WALS**

The executive body of WALS shall consist of the President, the Vice-President, the Secretary, and the Treasurer.

- (i) The President shall be the legal representative of the Society. He shall be elected by a simple majority

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votes at the Business Meeting during the West African Languages Congress. In exceptional cases, Council by consensus may propose a candidate for Presidency for ratification to the Business Meeting from among full Professors/Research Directors who shall be of international stature with at least ten years' experience at the apex of his/her carrier. Any presidential candidate must have rendered significant services to the Society. The President shall present an Annual Report to Council and a Biennial Report to the Business Meeting at every WALC.

- (ii) The Vice-President shall deputise for the President and stand in lieu of the President in his absence. He/she shall be elected by a simple majority votes at the Business Meeting during the West African Languages Congress. In exceptional cases, Council by consensus may propose a candidate for the Vice-Presidency for ratification to the Business Meeting from among full Professors/Research Directors who shall be of international stature with at least ten year's experience at the apex of his/her carrier. Any Vice-Presidential candidate must have rendered significant services to the Society.
- (iii) The Council and the Business Meeting shall ensure that either the President or the Vice-President is intelligible in English and French.
- (iv) The Secretary shall be fully bilingual. He shall function under the authority of the President and

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shall implement the policies of the Council and the resolutions of the Business Meeting. He shall conduct the correspondences of the Society, and see to the proper documentation of all activities of the Council and the Society. The Secretary shall be elected by a simple majority votes at the Business Meeting during the West African Languages Congress. In exceptional cases, Council by consensus may propose a candidate for the post of Secretary for ratification to the Business Meeting from among full Professors/Associate Professors/Research Directors who shall be of international stature with at least ten years experience at the apex of his/her carrier. Any candidate for the post of Secretary must have rendered significant services to the Society. The Secretary shall present an Annual Report to Council and a Biennial Report to the Business Meeting at every WALC.

- (v) The Treasurer shall be responsible for the administration of all financial records and resources of the Society. He shall present an annual Financial Report to Council and a Biennial Financial Report to the Business Meeting at every WALC.
- (vi) The President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer shall serve for a period of four (4) years (two Congresses), renewable only once.
- (vii) The President, the Vice-President, Secretary and the Treasurer shall be empowered by the Council to act on behalf of the Society between meetings in regard to such specific

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matters as the Council shall from time to time determine.

- (viii) For purposes of stability and policy continuity, the Immediate Past President shall be a member of Council until his/her successor hands over to a newly elected president.

**ARTICLE 6- THE EDITOR OF THE JOURNAL OF WEST AFRICAN LANGUAGES**

The Editor of the Journal of West African Languages (JWAL) shall be a seasoned Professor of international repute versed in the languages, literatures and cultures of West Africa. He shall be responsible for evaluating all manuscripts submitted to JWAL, select those which he considers suitable for the Journal and send same for peer reviewers advice and make a final decision on what gets published. He shall present an Annual Report to Council and a Biennial Report on the activities of JWAL to the Business Meeting at every WALC.

**ARTICLE 7 - FELLOWS OF THE WEST AFRICAN LINGUISTIC SOCIETY (FWALS)**

Council approved the institution of WALS Fellowship in Abidjan during the 2019 WALC. A WALS Fellowship nominee must be a Professor who has been a member of WALS for not less than six (6) years and has contributed immensely to the development of the Society and its goals. This fellowship is for life. Two nominations are required for each fellowship candidate to be considered for approval by the Council of WALS. The two nominations shall be considered and approved by Council.



**ARTICLE 8- THE WEST AFRICAN LANGUAGES  
CONGRESS**

The West African Languages Congress (WALC) shall hold every other year. Congress shall alternate between French speaking and English speaking countries of West Africa. Congress shall be organised under the auspices of WALS and the host shall take instructions from the Executive of WALS. The Bye-Laws of WALC are contained in the *MANUAL FOR ORGANISING THE WEST AFRICAN LANGUAGES CONGRESS* approved by Council and ratified by the Winneba Business Meeting of WALC 2017.

**ARTICLE 9 - SPECIALISED COMMITTEES**

The Council may establish ad hoc committees for the promotion of particular research projects or other scholarly activities of benefit to students of African languages.

**ARTICLE 10 - SEAT AND RESOURCES**

- (i) The seat of the Society shall be at the institution to which the Secretary is attached.
- (ii) The resources of the Society shall be derived from the contributions of its members, Annual Dues and any grants, donations or subventions accepted by the Council to be used in conformity with the aims of the Society as defined under Article 3.
- (iii) In conformity with Article 5, the President and under his authority; the Vice-President shall be empowered to administer the resources of the Society and to enter into contracts related to the

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implementation and financing of projects approved by the Council.

**ARTICLE 11 - BYE-LAWS AND INTERNAL REGULATIONS**

The Council shall have the authority to establish bye-laws and internal regulations on points not provided for by the present constitution. Such Bye-Laws shall be ratified by the Business Meeting.

**ARTICLE 12 LANGUAGE**

French English and any African language texts of the present constitution shall be received as equally valid in law.

**ARTICLE 13 - ENTRY INTO FORCE AND AMENDMENTS**

The present statutes, which supplement and improve the statute adopted in Ghana on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1965, shall come into force on the day of their adoption, on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023, by the 33<sup>rd</sup> West African Linguistic Congress in Accra, Ghana.

- (i) The Statutes may be amended if, after submission to the Council, the amendment is approved by a two-third majority of the full members of the Society.

## **MANUAL FOR ORGANISING THE WEST AFRICAN LANGUAGES CONGRESS**

### **1. Preamble.**

The West African Linguistic Society (WALS) was formed in 1965. It is a non-profitable association of academics, research workers, field workers and teachers drawn from the West African sub-region who are committed to the study of the languages of West Africa. The West African sub-regional countries include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Some of our very prominent members are colleagues resident in North America (Canada and USA), European Union (France, Netherlands, Spain, UK, Austria, Asian countries etc) who are engaged in the scholarly study of the languages of West Africa, of their literatures and any other linguistic aspect of the area. The activities of WALS are governed by a Council.

The West African Languages Congress (WALC) meets every other year under the auspices of WALS. It is in such Congresses that members present their scholarly research findings for scientific purposes. Such congresses seek solutions to the linguistic problems, language planning tasks, educational and social development challenges of the West African sub-region. These research findings are published in our globally distinguished **Journal of West African Languages** (JWAL). Article 5 and 6 of the Constitution of WALS adopted by the Fifth WALC in Accra on April 9<sup>th</sup> 1965 and amended by the 33<sup>rd</sup> WALC in Legon, Ghana in October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023 are quoted below.

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At the Business Meeting of the 29th WALC held in Abomey-Calavi on 14th August 2015, Council proposed that the Secretary and Treasurer be mandated to prepare a Conference Organisation Manual that specifies the modus operandi of organising WALC. This initiative is informed by the awareness of some of the avoidable difficulties encountered by host institutions during Congresses. Such a hosting guide will guard against altruistic expenditure by WALC and the Local Organisation Committee. The manual should clearly spell out the responsibilities of the Secretary-Treasurer and the role(s) and duties of each Host. Such a guide will facilitate accurate documentation of the proceedings of each Congress and the implementation of decisions of the Business Meeting after each Congress.

**2. Bidding**

The West African sub region from where WALC draws most of her members is bilingual. The tradition of the Society has been to alternate hosting rights between Anglophone and Francophone countries. This tradition restricts countries that can bid to host WALC. It ensures that bids at a Business Meeting are open only either to Francophone countries or to Anglophone countries determined by the last host. Bidders for WALC are given an opportunity to convince the Business Meeting why they should be given hosting rights. In some cases a tentative decision to award a bidder hosting rights is made on the floor of the Business Meeting. Sometimes such a provisional decision is delayed for further consultations in Council. The final decision on the next WALC host is

made when bidders forward a Letter of Commitment to Host WALC from authorities of their institution to the Office of the Secretary. The Secretary in consultation with the President and Members of Council may then announce the next WALC Host. Participants in WALC are drawn from institutions spread across the globe. Participants require long term scheduling to make adequate travel plans for participate in a Congress. To hold a successful Congress, the host and the executive of WALS require elaborate preparations which call for enough time. In recognition of this, the next host is usually unveiled one (1) year, eight (8) months ahead of the Opening Ceremony.

### **3. Announcement of Host**

After consultations with the President and Members of Council, the Secretary writes a formal Letter in response to the Letter of Commitment to Host from the head of the institution of the successful bidder. A letter from the Office of the Secretary opening a line of communication with the prospective Host Department/Faculty of the bidder is written informing them of their successful bid and the communication between the Office of the Secretary and their Principal.

### **4. The Local Organising Committee**

Preparations to host WALC begin in earnest with the constitution of a Local Organising Committee (LOC). The Society expects the host Department/Faculty to be at liberty in its selection of members of the LOC but the Executive of the Society should be notified for record purposes. When responsibilities are split, and

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specific people are assigned to accomplish definite jobs the complex task are carried out efficiently. The LOC should further be divided into Committees.

- a) The Reception Sub-Committee
- b) The Accommodation Sub-Committee
- c) The Transportation Sub-Committee
- d) The Finance Sub-Committee
- e) The Advert and Publicity Sub-Committee
- f) The Finance Sub-Committee
- g) Entertainment Sub-Committee
- h) The Registration Sub-Committee
- i) The Plenary and Parallel Session Sub-Committee
- j) The Information Sub-Communication and Technology Sub-Committee (to collaborate with the Publicity Sub-Committee but also see to reception of Abstracts, respond to email inquiries from prospective participants, send out Letters of Invitation, update the Congress Website etc).
- k) The Security Sub-Committee etc.

**4.1. Responsibilities of the LOC**

To ensure a smooth Congress, each LOC shall work under the auspices of the Executive of WALC.

- a) The LOC shall, in consultation with the President and the Secretary, select Keynote Speakers, Lead Paper Presenters, Chairmen of Parallel Sessions as well as Rapporteurs of Plenary and Parallel Sessions. These Rapporteurs shall document and give an accurate record of their sessions. Each Rapporteur shall insist that each presenter submits a soft and hard copy of each presentation immediately after their presentation. They

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shall keep to the official schedule of presentations in their Parallel Sessions and submit a report of their Session to the Secretariat.

- b) The LOC shall be solely responsible for the invitation of local dignitaries like the (Special Guest of Honour) to the Opening Ceremony of WALC. At each Opening Ceremony, the Keynote Speaker shall commence at exactly the time scheduled for the Keynote address without recourse to the arrival of the Special Guest of Honour. The official Opening Ceremony shall begin after the Special Guests of Honour shall have joined.
- c) The LOC shall take charge of protocol and ensure that Special Guests are properly seated and accorded their due respect as protocol demands.
- d) It shall be the responsibility of the LOC to make sure that speeches at the Opening Ceremony are adequately interpreted. This will enable participants who may not be competent in the alternate language of the WALC to comfortably follow deliberations at all events organised during Congress.
- e) The time taken up by entertainment (dance troupes, traditional presentations and cultural displays) shall be properly managed to allow more time for Keynote Speakers.
- f) Cocktails, Tea/Coffee Breaks shall be properly managed to avoid late resumptions at Sessions. The LOC shall determine what ticket(s) admit registered members and conference participants to these events. From experience, it is essential that Students or the catering

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service invited to help serve at Tea/Coffee breaks and elsewhere be properly informed about what is expected of them. A mismanagement of this task can cost the LOC needed time and money.

- g) Excursions out of the Congress venue shall be organised by the LOC. Security in West and Central Africa is gradually attracting more scrutiny. It shall be the responsibility of the LOC to ensure that very safe tourists' sites are selected for such excursions. Very often scheduled excursions are cancelled at Congresses because of onsite registration for it. Also, Congress participants are likely to experience cash depletion towards the end of Congress and are most likely to begin to prepare for their return journey to their institutions. In such instances, prior arrangements by the LOC for such excursions are abandoned. The cost implications for these cancellations are obvious. Online registration for planned excursions can assist the LOC to plan ahead with a number of those who have actually paid for the excursion in mind.
- h) The LOC shall provide an ICT compliant Secretariat for the Secretary. Such a Secretariat shall be equipped with a functional computer with a French/English text translator and a printer.
- i) The LOC will insist that each paper accepted for presentation shall be briefly summarised in the alternate language (i.e. a paper written in French shall contain a brief summary of its contents in English, just like a paper written in English shall be briefly summarised in French). If the talk deals with an African language the Abstract shall also be translated in the African language. Such



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summaries will bridge the language barrier often experienced in WALC.

- j) Younger colleagues are attracted to attend Conferences and Congresses because of an opportunity to showcase their research findings, meet younger and older colleagues and to publish. In the past few years, the publication of Congress Proceedings has been managed by the LOC. The result of this is that after Congress, the LOC is disbanded and the zeal to work on the papers presented at the Congress diminishes. Council has decided that all papers presented at WALC Congress will be under the management of the JWAL Editor, the Secretary and the Chairman of the LOC. The publication of the Proceedings of Congress shall not be delayed for more than one year after the Closing Ceremony of the Congress. The Proceedings shall be officially presented at the next Congress.
- k) It shall be the responsibility of the LOC to accommodate and feed Members of Council during Congress.
- l) The transportation of all Congress participants (to and from the Airports, to and from their Hotels to the venue of Congress) shall be taken care of by the LOC.
- m) The LOC shall in collaboration with the Secretary-Treasurer document all registered participants at the Congress. Each participant will pay:
  - a) Membership Dues (both current and year(s) pending);
  - b) Conference Fees;
  - c) Paper Assessment Fees;

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- d) Excursion Fees;
  - e) Dinner Fees; and all other fees as may be determined by the LOC. Congress participants who electronically pay these fees shall bring evidence of e-payments along with them to the onsite registration centre.
- n) Membership Dues and Registration shall be done online. For adequate planning, the LOC shall set a deadline for Conference Registration. The 'Early Bird' registration offer employed at most international conferences is encouraged. Participants who opt to register late should pay more than those who registered early. Onsite registration should be discouraged because it deprives the LOC the ability to plan. However, participants who choose onsite registration should pay even more than those who registered late.
- o) 'Early Bird' registration gives the opportunity to the LOC to provide the appropriate number of conferences materials (bags, badges, pens, dinner tickets etc). Such planning will prevent expenses on procuring materials for participants who change their intention to attend Congress at the last minute. Such early registration also prevents a shortage of materials where more participants turn up for the Congress than the number planned for.
- p) Accommodation can be a very sour issue for the LOC. With 'Early Bird' registration, the LOC shall make rebate arrangements with Hotels, Restaurants etc to host Congress participants. To avoid personal negotiations between Hotel owners and Congress participants, the LOC can have participants pay for their accommodation upfront and the Registration Centre before Congress

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participants are transported to their Hotels. This will avoid the LOC having to deal with cases of Congress participants who depart without meeting their accommodation charges.

- q) The LOC shall provide a Registration Centre which shall be the first point of call for Congress participants. At this point, each Participant's electronic payments shall be verified and confirmed. After such confirmation, the participant shall be handed his/her conference materials receipts of payment. He/she shall thereafter be transported to his/her accommodation of choice.
- r) On registration participants shall be given a Conference bag containing note pads and writing materials. The bag shall also contain a Book of Abstracts, the WALC Programme, and any other necessary information that can be of help to participants.
- s) The LOC shall set up a website solely for the purpose of updating intending WALC participants. Such a Website shall be constantly updated with Congress information.
- t) The LOC shall be free to approach embassies, oil companies and other corporate organisations for purposes of raising funds for WALC. This will be done under the supervision of the LOC Chairperson with the honesty deserving of WALS.
- u) Except the money realised from membership dues, the rest may be used to upset some of the expenses uncured as running cost. The rest of the money shall be handed over to the Society.
- v) Working in conjunction with the executive of WALS, the

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Chairman of the LOC shall complete a Declaration Form to confirm that the WALC Accounts are a correct reflection of all the monetary and financial support received on behalf of WALC before and after the Congress.

- w) All the cash realised will be lodged into the Accounts of WALC.
- x) The LOC shall give a preliminary financial account immediately after the end of WALC and before the departure of the Executive. A detail report will be submitted to the Secretary not later than six months after the end of WALC.
- y) It is the tradition for the LOC of WALC to accommodate Workshops within a Congress. If the need for such Workshop arises, it will be the responsibility of the LOC to organise it, provide an appropriate venue for it and list the Workshop in the programme. Sometimes such workshops are held alongside Parallel Sessions.

**5. The Office of the Secretary**

The Secretary under the authority of Council and the President has the responsibility to ensure the day-to-day running of WALC. He implements the decision of Council, keeps records and conducts correspondences for the Society. To ensure a successful Congress the following are expected of the Secretary:

- a) The Secretary shall ensure that bids for hosting rights are conducted as spelt out in the Constitution of the Society. It is important that a fair chance is given to member institutions that have indicated the interest to host. It is also necessary that decisions

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taken on the floor of the Business Committee or in Council concerning bids are objectively presented to guide a fair final decision. The Secretary sees to this.

b) The Secretary shall communicate the final decision of a successful bid and ensure that a LOC is put in place to commence plans for the next WALC.

c) He shall keep the Members of Council, the President and members of WALS updated on the progress of the preparations for WALC.

e) The Secretary shall continuously monitor the Congress preparations of each prospective host. It is his responsibility to ensure that the appropriate LOC Committees are in place. It is the tradition that at an appropriate time, the Secretary and the President visits the prospective host institution to assess the physical preparedness of the host. A report about such an assessment is sent to all Council Members.

f) The Secretary, the Treasurer, the Vice-President and the President shall arrive for Congress two days before the Opening Ceremony. This early arrival offers them an opportunity to hold preliminary meetings with the LOC as well as prepare for the Council Meeting and the Business Meeting. Their departure is also delayed as they have to make an assessment of the success or otherwise of the Congress. If it turns out to be an Election Year, the time after Congress is used to hand over to the newly elected executive of the Society.

g) The Treasurer shall bring along receipts of the payment of Membership Dues to be issued to

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members who pay for their membership dues electronically.

h) The Secretary shall ensure that the dates of any WALC do not coincide with the dates of any other meeting capable of splitting the interest and the attention of members of WALC.

**6. The Office of the Treasurer**

He is the treasurer and the chief accountant of WALC. It is the responsibility of the Secretary-Treasurer to make certain that all members pay their membership dues up-to-date. Such payments will be lodged directly by each member into the ECOBANK Account of the Society. ECOBANK was chosen for this task at the Ibadan WALC in 2013 because of its West African regional reach.

*These Bye-Laws were proposed at the 2015 Abome-Calavi Business Meeting and adopted at the 2017 WALC Council Meeting and ratified by the Business Meeting in Winneba, Ghana on Wednesday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August, 2017.*