

25 May 2015

Prof Shahin Sheikh-Jabbari
Institute for Research in Fundamental Science (IPM)
Tehran
IRAN

Dear Prof Sheikh-Jabbari,

Invitation to serve on the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) of the National Institute for Theoretical Physics

It is my pleasure to invite to become a member of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the National Institute for Theoretical Physics (NITheP). Below I provide more information on NITheP, its functioning and the role of the Scientific Advisory Committee.

In May 2008 the National Institute for Theoretical Physics (NITheP) was established. NITheP's main function is to lead research programmes and education opportunities in the field of theoretical physics in South Africa and Africa. It is a geographically distributed institute, which includes all theoretical physicists in South Africa, with headquarters at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies (STIAS) at Stellenbosch University and regional nodes at the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The three nodes develop and support theoretical physics in their local regions, as well as nationally.

In terms of research focuses, the Stellenbosch node focuses mainly on statistical and condensed matter physics, the node at the University of the Witwatersrand mainly on high energy physics, particularly string theory and matrix models, and the node at the University of KwaZulu-Natal mainly on quantum computing and information. However, it is NITheP's function to foster research in all branches of theoretical physics at all South African tertiary institutions, which it attempts to do through a network of associate members. Currently NITheP has 63 individual Associates, 2 Junior, 4 Institutional and 5 Strategic, a full list can be viewed here <http://www.nithep.ac.za/associates.html>. This brings researchers from the fields of high energy phenomenology (University of Cape Town), cosmology and astrophysics (University of Cape Town and KwaZulu-Natal) also into the network.

More Information on NITheP's goals and functioning may be found at the website <http://www.nithep.ac.za>, and a record of our Annual Reports may be found here <http://www.nithep.ac.za/about.html>.

NITheP became fully operational with the appointment of a director, two deputy directors and five researchers at the end of 2008 and beginning of 2009. Currently NITheP has 5 researchers and 7 postdoctoral fellows. The governance structure of NITheP makes provision for two managerial structures, the Steering committee and the Scientific Advisory Committee. The Steering committee's function is mainly to ensure good governance of NITheP in terms administration, finances, quality control and strategies. The Scientific Advisory Committee will play its main role in the latter two. One of the Scientific Advisory Committee's main functions will be to advise the NITheP Steering committee and management on the strategic positioning of NITheP in the international, national and African context. For this reason we are approaching persons with a good understanding of the important drivers in

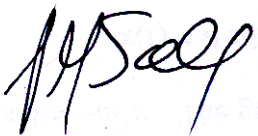
international theoretical physics and science in general, as well as an understanding of the South African and African context. Since we are respectful on the demands in terms of time/travel that we request from our SAC members, NITheP wishes to appoint, apart from the existing four members, an additional three SAC members in order to lighten the load on the total group, with particular reference to attendance of the bi-annual SAC meetings.

The NITheP management identified you as one such person and has therefore decided to invite you to serve on the Scientific Advisory Committee. The Scientific Advisory Committee will meet at most once every second year, around March, to make its input into the Steering committee meetings which take place on an annual basis during March and October. The Scientific Advisory Committee will, however, play an active role in the five year evaluation cycles of NITheP, the first of which was in 2011, and the next evaluation will take place during 2016. The current members of the SAC are Profs Neil Turok (Perimeter), Jan Govaerts (University of Louvain), Jim Gates Jnr (University of Maryland) and Sir Peter Knight (Imperial College).

The NITheP management shall greatly appreciate it if you can accept this invitation. We are aware of the fact that it will require some time from your side, but we give the assurance that we shall always attempt to minimize the impact in terms of workload and time consumption. Since this is the first theoretical physics institute formally sponsored by an African government, it is an enormous opportunity to convince the broader African community of the social and economic benefits that the pursuit of pure science may bring.

We look forward to your positive response to this invitation.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Scholtz', written in a cursive style.

Prof Frederik Scholtz
Director: NITheP