

# IAU100 NameExoWorlds: A Call to Promote Global Citizenship

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IAU100 NameExoWorlds is a global project designed by the International Astronomical Union (IAU) in celebration of the organisation's first hundredth anniversary in 2019. People from all over the world are invited to suggest names for exoworlds in a global effort to bring astronomy closer to the public and to stimulate a feeling of global citizenship.

## Introduction

The 100th anniversary of the International Astronomical Union (IAU)<sup>1</sup> is an important milestone being enthusiastically celebrated through thousands of local, regional and global activities taking place worldwide. These events

have included stargazing for people who are elderly or refugees, dark skies celebrations, and parties for the 50th anniversary of the moon landing.

For the anniversary, the IAU, through the IAU100 NameExoWorlds Steering Committee and national committees, is

organising the IAU100 NameExoWorlds global initiative<sup>2</sup> (Figure 2). Typically astronomical names are chosen by members of specific groups within the IAU<sup>3</sup>. But the NameExoWorlds project, based on a previous edition held in 2015, invites countries to develop their own national



Figure 1. An artist's impression of the Proxima b planet of the red dwarf star Proxima Centauri. Credit: ESO/M. Kornmesser

contest to select a name for an assigned system composed of one exoplanet and its host star (Figure 1), allowing the members of the public to engage with the planetary naming process. This way the chosen names will represent well-known characteristics of each participating country, increasing the interest for astronomy within the country and providing the opportunity to each state to immortalize its own culture in the sky.

### What Are Exoworlds?

The term “exoworlds” refers to, in the context of this project, the systems composed of one exoplanet and their host star. Each participating country was assigned one system that is known to consist of one gas giant planet orbiting a single star, so all participating countries have the opportunity to name similar celestial objects. When possible, the assigned systems are somehow linked to the countries by the facilities or scientists involved in the discovery of the exoplanet. Additionally, all assigned stars can be observed with a small telescope from the latitude of the capital of each country.

### How Does the Project Work?

The core idea of the project is to engage as many people as possible in a global effort to name these exoworlds through national public contests. National committees have been created in each participating country to be responsible for developing the respective naming projects at the national level. Most of the national

committees were formed by the local National Outreach Coordinators (NOC), under the umbrella of the IAU Office for Astronomy Outreach (IAU OAO). Countries without NOCs also had the chance to create their own national committees. All United Nations (UN) Member States, plus UN Observer States, and all dependent territories were welcomed to participate in an inclusive effort to engage the whole world in this special initiative.

Each national committee has been collecting names from the public, and most committees, as of October 2019, will then shortlist potential names. Some committees will put these names up for a national public vote while others will do the vote themselves. These votes will take place between October 2019 and November 2019. If the chosen names are in agreement with all IAU naming rules and approved by the IAU, they will be accepted as official names of those stars and planets.

### Results Thus Far

To date, about 100 countries are participating in the project by organizing national contests, proving that the public interest in astronomy is substantial. As a global and multicultural project in its nature, we expect millions of people around the world to be engaged in the project by the end of the initiative. Countries worldwide have embraced this initiative as a common goal: to unite in global citizenship on our planet, one world among many. By feeling a connection to other planets — developing an interest in their unanswered mysteries

and understanding that we won't be able to answer these mysteries firsthand — we hope that people will find the value in preserving Earth and think of themselves as citizens of our one, isolated planet.

The chosen popular names that meet the IAU criteria will be officially recognised by the IAU, and be used in conjunction with the scientific designations. Those who suggested the selected names will be recognized for their contribution.

The IAU approved names from all countries' final submissions will be released all at once in December 2019.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.iau-100.org/>
- <sup>2</sup> <http://www.nameexoworlds.iau.org/>
- <sup>3</sup> <https://www.iau.org/public/themes/naming/>



**IAU100**  
**NameExoWorlds**

Figure 2. Logo for the IAU100 NameExoWorlds initiative. Courtesy of the IAU100 NameExoWorlds initiative

### Biographies

Eduardo Monfardini Penteado is the IAU100 NameExoWorlds coordinator based in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

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