Constitution of the

African Union of the Blind
Union Africaine Des Aveugles

Adopted by the

9th General Assembly,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

October 2019
ARTICLE I: NAME, LOCATION, DURATION AND STATUS

Section 1: Name

The name of the Union shall be the "African Union of The Blind" (AFUB), herein after referred to as the Union or "Union Africaine Des Aveugles" (UAFA). The Union shall be an association of organisations of and for blind people in the African continent.

Section 2: Location

The Secretariat of the Union shall be located in Nairobi. The Secretariat may be transferred to such a place as may be decided by the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Board of Officers.

Section 3: Duration

The duration of the Union shall be unlimited.

Section 4: Status

The Union shall be a non-governmental and non-profit making organisation and does not discriminate against any organization or individual on the basis of gender, age, race, disability or religion.

Section 5: Relationships

The Union shall work towards the establishment and maintenance of official relations with the African Union (AU) and all other organisations having similar aims or having the possibility of extending valuable assistance. The Union shall constitute the regional Union of the World Blind Union (WBU) in Africa.

Section 6: Definitions
Throughout this constitution,

a) The term "blindness" includes both blindness and partial sight and the term "blind" means blind and partially sighted. National members shall be entitled by this constitution to use their own national definition of blindness.

b) Organization of blind people means an organisation representative of blind people in a particular country, having a majority of members consisting of blind persons ordinarily paying a membership fee, and having a governing body with a majority of blind persons, elected by the members at regular intervals. Any other organisation working in the field of blindness but which does not qualify to be an organisation of blind people shall be regarded, for the purpose of this constitution, as an organisation for blind people.

c) "Table Officers" has the meaning assigned to it by Article V section 3.

d) “Youths” This refers to a person who is between eighteen (18) and thirty five (35) years of age

ARTICLE II: OBJECTS AND POWERS

Section 1: Objects

The objects of the Union are:

a) to protect and promote the human, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of blind and partially sighted people;

b) to enable blind and partially sighted persons to join together and express their views and aspirations and, in accordance with
democratically adopted decisions, to take collective actions to work towards the advancement and well-being of blind and partially sighted people with the goal of equalization of opportunities and full participation in society, if necessary, by special, legal or administrative measures;

c) to strengthen the self-awareness of blind and partially sighted persons, to develop their personality, self-respect and sense of responsibility, to provide a continental forum for the exchange of knowledge and experience in the field of blindness, and to work for the prevention of blindness.

Section 2: Powers

The Powers of the Union shall include the following:

a) The progressive improvement and modernisation throughout the African continent of public policies and practices governing the education, health, welfare, social security, rehabilitation, employment, sports and recreation of blind people;

b) To strengthen and develop national organizations of the blind and help establish national organizations of the blind, where such organizations do not exist;

c) The provision for the encouragement of the exchange of information and experience between all organisations whose activities relate to the objects of the Union;

d) The dissemination of accurate information and the promotion of enlightened attitudes on the part of the people of the world towards blind and partially sighted people;
e) The encouragement, co-ordination, and conduct of research and studies in all fields of blindness, including its prevention;

f) The provision, promotion and co-ordination of technical and material assistance in furtherance of the aims of the Union in areas where such help is required;

g) To solicit the support of national governments and national and international organisations everywhere to support programmes and policies of the Union and of organisations of and for blind people, and to assist and advise those bodies in their implementation;

h) To encourage the participation of the parents of blind and partially sighted children (who cannot represent themselves) in all decisions affecting the education, well-being and aspirations of themselves and their children;

i) to strive for equal representation and participation of gender and age in its activities and, in particular, in the selection by national and special members of delegations to the Assembly.

j) To take any other measures necessary or conducive to the achievement of the objects of the Union.

**ARTICLE III: MEMBERSHIP**

**Section 1: Classes**

Membership of the Union shall be open to organizations of / for blind people from all countries within Africa, recognised as independent states by the United Nations, and shall comprise the following categories:

a) *National members:* Organisations of blind people, which represent a
country, and which are admitted to membership by the Board of Officers and pay the membership fee or otherwise fulfill membership requirements. Provided that where in any country one or more organisations of blind people operating at national level join together with or without organisations for blind people to form a consortium which seeks national membership for that country. The Board of Officers may admit that consortium as a national member on payment of the membership fee but only if the organisations which form the consortium agree that at least one half of the delegates for the assembly are nominated by organisations of blind people.

b) **Special members:** A special member is an organisation or organisations for blind people representing a country in which there is, for the time being, no national organisation of blind people in existence, which is admitted by the executive and pays the membership fee. A special member shall be expected actively to promote the establishment of a national organisation of blind people in its country and its membership shall be reviewed by the Board of Officers every four years. Special members shall have 50 percent voting power during the General Assembly.

c) **International Members:** Those international organisations invited by the Board of Officers to become international members and which pay the membership fee. To qualify for such membership, the organisation shall be one which promotes and co-ordinates substantial international programmes of activities for the benefit of blind and partially sighted people or for the prevention of blindness.

d) **Honorary life members:** Those persons deemed to have rendered long and outstanding international service to blind and partially sighted people or in the prevention of blindness may, on the recommendation of the national member from the country where he / she resides and with the approval of the Board of officers, be elected by the Assembly as honorary life member of the Union. In the case of an honorary life member who
dies or who has died, the Executive Director shall record his/ her name and a summary of the citation to the Assembly in a roll of honour to be maintained by him / her and placed in the Union archives.

e) Associate members: Upon payment of an annual membership fee to be determined by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Board of Officers, any legal entity which does not otherwise qualify under any class or category of membership under this Constitution, may, on the recommendation of the Board of Officers, be admitted as an associate member of the Union, with rights to speak as an observer but without any voting rights on any issue.

Section 2: Procedure

Application for membership of the Union (other than for associate membership) shall be made to the Executive Director and approved by the Board of Officers. In addition to this, application for Associate Membership shall be made to the Executive Director and approved by the Board of Officers with the prior approval of the national member concerned. Honorary life members shall be elected by the General Assembly.

Section 3: Fees.

The membership fees for National, Special, International, and Associate members shall be determined by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Board of Officers.

The Board of Officers shall decide on the sanctions to be imposed on members who do not fulfill their membership fee obligation.

ARTICLE IV: THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Section 1: Status and Composition
The General Assembly is the sovereign body of the Union.

a) The national, special, international, honorary life members and the members of the outgoing Board of Officers shall constitute the delegates to the General Assembly.

b) The associate members may attend the general assembly in a consultative capacity.

c) The president of the Union may invite observers to be present at the assembly after consultation with the national member from the country in which the observer resides.

d) Delegates to the assembly shall consist of persons whose names have been submitted to and approved by the Credentials Committee. If a delegate is unable to attend a meeting of the General Assembly, his vote shall automatically pass to the other delegate from the same country.

Section 2: Procedure

a) There may be ordinary and extraordinary meetings of the General Assembly. Ordinary meetings shall be held every four years. Extraordinary meetings may be convened at any time in exceptional circumstances by the President and any other officer or by a majority of the officers.

b) The President or, in his / her absence, the Vice-President, shall preside at meetings of the General Assembly.

Section 3: Powers

The General Assembly shall serve as the legislature and shall adopt policies for the Union towards achieving its objects. Its functions shall include the
following:

a) It shall consider and decide upon all recommendations submitted by the Board of Officers;

b) It shall receive and consider the report of the Board of Officers on their work and on the work of the committees;

c) It shall consider the financial report for the last four year term submitted by the Honorary Treasurer;

d) It shall discuss and adopt a plan of action for the next four year term;

e) It shall, on the recommendation of the Board of Officers, determine the rate of membership fees for national, special, international and associate members;

f) It shall elect the President and the Vice President of the Union; it shall receive notification of the election of the chairperson of the Women’s Committee, chairperson of the youth committee and of the Regional Officers elected in conformity with Article VII, Section 2, and Article V, Section 1, Sub-section a) Clause 2;

g) It shall consider and decide upon any proposal from members of the Union. To ensure well informed debates and well considered discussions, any proposal shall under ordinary circumstances be handed in to the Executive Director 3 months prior to the General Assembly. It is the responsibility of the Executive Director to circulate such proposals to all delegates. Proposals shall be submitted in due time for production in Braille and other formats to be prepared and circulated either prior to or shortly after the opening of the General Assembly;

h) it shall consider and decide upon proposals to amend the Constitution
of the Union;

i) It shall consider and decide on recommendations by the Board of Officers proposing the election of a person as an honorary life member of the Union;

j) It shall receive and consider audited reports on the financial position of the Union.

k) It shall consider the appointments of the Union for the next four years.

l) It shall take any other measures necessary or conducive to the achievement of the objects of the Union.

Section 4: Voting

a) National, international and honorary life members shall each be entitled to one vote per delegate at the assembly. Members shall send the stipulated number of delegates to the General Assembly ensuring parity between the sexes. Each national member shall send 3 delegates to the General assembly ensuring the inclusion of youths and women as delegates

b) Members of the Board of Officer, with the exception of the Executive Director shall each have the status of a delegate in their own right and be entitled to one vote each.

c) All questions shall be decided by a simple majority vote except for constitutional amendments and proposals for the dissolution of the Union.

d) Abstentions shall always be ignored when counting votes.

e) Voting may be by acclamation (viva voce), by roll call, by show of
hands, or, if twenty per cent or more of the delegates present demand, by secret ballot. At elections where there is more than one candidate, voting shall always be by secret ballot.

f) The Board of Officers may between assemblies invoke a postal ballot of all National, International and Honorary Life Members to resolve questions which it believes are outside its mandate or beyond its capacity to decide, or, to fill a vacancy occurring because the President or Vice President is unable to perform the duties for which he / she was elected.

g) A quorum shall consist of a simple majority of delegates with voting rights.

ARTICLE V: THE OFFICERS

Section 1: Composition

a) A Board of 7 (seven) Officers shall be elected to lead the Union between General Assemblies and is responsible to the General Assembly.

1. The Board of Officers shall consist of the Table Officers elected at the General Assembly, five Regional Officers, chairperson of the youth committee and the Chairperson of the Women's Committee. No more than two of the Table Officers may be of the same gender, ensuring representation of both genders.

2. The Regional Officers and their deputies shall be elected at a
meeting of the delegates in their respective regions which shall be held before or during the General Assembly.

b) In addition to the Officers elected by the General Assembly and the regions, an Honorary Treasurer shall be appointed by the incoming Board of Officers at their meeting immediately after the General Assembly. He / she shall be present at Officers' meetings and meetings of the General Assembly with the right to speak but without voting rights. The president is politically responsible for the work of the Honorary Treasurer.

c) The Officers may hold territorial status during their term of office and, if they were delegates at the General Assembly, their seats as delegates shall be filled in the normal way at or after the end of the General Assembly. If a regional Officer is unable to perform the duties for which he / she were elected, his/her place shall be filled by his / her deputy. For the chairperson of the Women's Committee, her place shall be filled by her deputy. In the case of the President and Vice President, vacancies occurring must be filled by a postal ballot of all national delegates, international and honorary life members as provided for in Article IV, section 4 Sub-section f).

d) The Officers are elected for a period of four years. All Officers are eligible for re-election. However, the President shall not be elected more than two times.

e) Two Representatives of blind women shall be elected at a dedicated meeting for women's representatives, the Blind Women's Forum which shall be held before or during the General Assembly of the Union.

f) Two representatives of blind youths a male and a female shall be elected at a dedicated meeting for blind youths representatives, a blind youth forum shall be held before or during the general assembly of the Union.
To ensure reasonable accommodation of both gender. The youth chairperson shall rotate every 4 years and that if a female chairperson is elected then the deputy shall be from opposite gender and vise versa. Notwithstanding provisions of this clause, Blind youths standing as chairperson shall be 31 years of age or below.

Section 2: Powers and Functions

a) The Board of Officers shall be the principal administrative organ of the Union.

b) The Board of Officers shall have the power of decision and be directly responsible to the General Assembly for interpreting and carrying out in detail the general policies adopted by the General Assembly, and for the internal administration, management and control of the affairs and property of the Union. The Board of Officers shall appoint ad hoc committees and working groups to implement decisions made by the General Assembly and take action as necessary between Assembly meetings. In so doing, they shall have the authority to take all necessary actions not specifically reserved for the General Assembly.

c) Each Regional Officer shall encourage activities within the field of blindness and promote co-operation between the national members of his / her region. He / she shall serve as a link between the region and the Board of Officers, conveying ideas and recommendations from the region to the Officers and bringing information from the work of the Board of Officers back to the region. The Regional Officers have an important task and a major responsibility to produce progress reports on projects to the Union secretariat or others and to provide information which is conducive to or useful for the smooth running of activities within the region.

d) The President shall preside over the meetings of the Board of Officers.
This body shall meet whenever the President deems necessary or when demanded by a majority of their members. All decisions of the Board of Officers shall be taken by a simple majority of the votes. In the event of a tied vote, the President may exercise a casting vote. A quorum shall be 5 out of the 9 Officers present of which at least 1 (one) is a Table Officer.

Section 3: Table Officers

a) "Table Officers" means the President, the Vice-President, the Chairperson of the Women's Committee, the chairperson of the youth committee, if the requirement in Article V, section 1 sub-section a), clause 3 is fulfilled. The Honorary Treasurer shall participate in Table Officers meetings without voting rights.

b) The Table Officers are responsible to the Board of Officers.

c) The President shall preside at meetings of the table officers. A Quorum shall be three of the Table Officers, present in person or connected to a teleconference call. Together with the Executive Director, he / she shall prepare all meetings.

d) The President and the Executive Director, upon specific mandate or general guidelines, shall represent the Union in external meetings and forums. The President may delegate to another Officer the right to represent the Union on his / her behalf.

e) If the President is of the opinion that it is appropriate and in the interests of the Union that action should be taken before the next meeting of the Board of Officers, the Table Officers may carry out all or any of the functions of that body prior to such meeting. Minutes of meetings of the Table Officers shall be circulated to the Board of Officers by the Executive Director, and where appropriate, decisions taken by the Table Officers shall be ratified by the next meeting of the
Board of Officers.

f) The Executive Director shall ensure that proper minutes are taken of all meetings of the Board of Officers and Table Officers and meetings of the General Assembly and otherwise undertake the secretarial duties properly pertaining to his/her office.

g) The Honorary Treasurer shall, under the direction of the President, properly perform the duties pertaining to his / her office. The Honorary Treasurer shall regularly report on the financial situation of the Union to the Officers through the President and shall ensure that financial records of the Union are kept in a proper manner.

Section 4: Removal from Office

a) An Officer may be removed from office if he / she fail to perform his / her duties to the satisfaction of the organ which elected them and / or in the case of gross misconduct. An absolute majority (two thirds) of the eligible delegates shall be required to invoke such a removal.

b) If such a member is removed from office during a regional meeting under sub-section a) above, he / she shall cease to hold any position as an Officer. Such an Officer shall automatically be replaced by his / her deputy in the case of Regional Officers.

c) If the President is removed from office under sub-sections a) and b) above, then the Vice - President shall automatically assume office. The position of the Vice – President shall then be filled as provided for in sub-section d) below.

d) If the position of the Vice – President falls vacant under sub-sections a) and b) above or in pursuant of sub-section c), then the Board of Officers shall elect his / her replacement from among themselves during the next meeting immediately after the removal from office.
e) The Honorary Treasurer may be removed from office if he / she fail to perform his / her duties to the satisfaction of the Board of Officers and / or in case of gross misconduct as determined by the Board. In such a case the Board of Officers shall appoint his / her replacement as provided for under Article V Section 1, sub-section a), clause 3.

ARTICLE VI: THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

a) The Board of Officers shall appoint an Executive Director and may dismiss him/her if he / she fail to perform his / her duties to the satisfaction of the Officers or in the case of gross misconduct.

b) The Executive Director shall be the chief paid administrative officer of the Union. He / she shall be responsible to the Officers and shall submit quarterly progress reports on the activities of the Union to the Officers together with such reports as may be requested by the President.

c) The Executive Director shall be responsible for the day-to-day affairs and the operation of the Secretariat of the Union. On the advice of the Officers, he / she may appoint staff for the secretariat and supervise and coordinate their work in accordance with their contracts.

d) The Executive Director shall be responsible for the implementation of the Union's plan of action, including projects and programmes and shall report on these to the Officers between General Assemblies, and to the General Assembly or to the members as requested by the President. The focal work of the Secretariat shall at all times be to strengthen and promote national organizations of the blind in Africa and related activities. All programmes or projects that entail major economic or administrative liabilities or responsibilities for the Union, or which require changes in secretarial staffing, require prior approval by the Table Officers or, in urgent circumstances, by the President,
before decisive steps are taken to submit proposals or close contracts.

e) The Executive Director shall, when requested by the Officer, represent the Union at regional and international meetings and be the chief spokesperson on operational matters.

f) Working in collaboration with the President and Officers of the Union, the Executive Director shall coordinate meetings of the Board of Officers, the Table Officers and sessions of the General Assembly.

g) In collaboration with the Honorary Treasurer and the Finance and Fundraising Committee, the Executive Director shall prepare annual budgets, coordinate audited statements and have these presented to the Board of Officers. He / she shall prepare minutes of meetings of the Board of Officers and Table Officers and of sessions of the General Assembly.

ARTICLE VII: REGIONS

1. The National and Special members shall form five geographical regional groups: Northern Africa, Central Africa, Western Africa, Eastern Africa and Southern Africa. The General Assembly of the Union shall confirm which countries belong to the respective regions.

2. A meeting shall be held of each region, before or during the General Assembly in order to elect a person and a deputy to represent the region on the Board of Officers as provided for under Article V, section 1, sub-section a), clause 2.

3. The regional meeting shall consist of delegates appointed by the national and special members of the Union in the region. Each national member has two votes at the regional meeting and special members have one vote.
4. Where a coordinating organisation or a mechanism representing national organisations of blind people and agencies providing services to them does not exist in a country, its delegates shall be chosen after consultation between recognised organisations of blind people and agencies providing services to blind people.

5. If a country cannot agree on whether an organisation should be regarded as a recognised national organisation of blind people, or on the composition of its delegation to the regional meeting, it shall request the assistance of the Regional Officers if necessary in consultation with the Executive Director.

6. In addition to electing the Regional Officer and his / her deputy, other matters of interest to the region may be discussed at the regional meetings and recommendations may be submitted to the Board of Officers and the General Assembly.

7. Candidates for the posts of Regional Officers and of deputies must, 5 months prior to the regional meetings through the Union secretariat, submit information to the members in the Region on his / her capacity, willingness, ability and commitment to undertake assigned tasks and responsibilities in accordance with the specifications given in Article V, section 2, sub-section c) of this Constitution.

ARTICLE VIII: COMMITTEES

Section 1: Committees, Working Groups etc.

a) The Board of Officers or, if deemed appropriate by the President, the Table Officers, shall appoint:

1. A Finance and Fundraising Committee consisting of three of the Officers, the Executive Director and the Honorary Treasurer. The Committee may invite to its meetings any person who, in its
judgment, may be of service to the committee in financial and fundraising matters. The Committee shall consider the financial position of the Union and make recommendations to the Officers. The Committee shall also endeavour to make concrete recommendations to the Officers with regard to projects which may improve the financial position of the Union;

2. A Credentials & Elections Committee, the duties of which shall include advising the General Assembly on the validity of the appointment of delegates, transfer of voting power and other related issues;

3. A Committee for the advancement of the interests of blind women;

4. A Committee for the advancement of the interests of blind youth;

5. The African Union of the Blind Solidarity Trust Fund Committee in accordance with the statutes of that committee;

6. Any other committees for carrying out such duties as they may deem necessary and appropriate.

b) Within six months after the end of the General Assembly, the Chairs of the appointed Committees shall submit a plan of action and budget to the Finance and Fundraising committee. The Finance and Fundraising Committee shall have authority to examine and make recommendation to such budgets before submitting them to the Board of Officers for approval.

c) Committees may, subject to the approval of the President, create subcommittees to cover specific fields within the broader scope of the committees' work, or ad hoc working groups to deal with particular tasks assigned to them.
Section 2: Reporting

All committees shall maintain regular contact with the Board of Officers and the Executive Director and must report to the General Assembly about their activities. Sub-committees and ad hoc working groups shall report to their respective Committees. The Board of Officers shall regularly review the structure and functioning of the committees.

ARTICLE IX: FINANCE

Section 1: Financial Year

The financial year of the Union shall run from 1st January to 31st December.

Section 2: The Honorary Treasurer

a) The Honorary Treasurer, appointed in conformity with the provision in Article V, sections 1, sub-section a), clause 3, shall keep close contact with the accountant and the Executive Director and inform the President and the Board of the financial position of the Union at regular intervals, and when called upon by the President. He / she shall advise the Officers and the Executive Director on financial matters. He / she shall attend all meetings of the Finance and fundraising Committee, meetings of the Board of Officers and the General Assembly.

b) The Honorary Treasurer must reside in the country where the secretariat of the Union is situated.

Section 3: Membership Fees

a) The amounts of the membership fees shall be determined by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Board of Officers.
b) The amounts of membership fees may be different for each category of membership and may differ within the categories. The criteria by which such fees shall be determined shall be laid down by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Board of Officers.

c) Membership fees for national, special, international and associate members are payable within the first half of the financial year.

Section 4: Expenses

It shall be the duty of the Officers at all times to keep the expenses of the Union strictly within its income and reserves.

Section 5: Records

a) The Board of Officers shall ensure that proper financial records are kept and that accepted accounting practices are followed. Books of accounts and all supporting documents shall be held at the secretariat of the Union and shall be available for inspection by the Board of Officers and the members of the Finance and Fundraising Committee.

b) All financial records must be audited each year by a qualified independent auditor, following which the audit certificate shall be tabled at the next meeting of the Board of Officers and then circulated to the national and special members.

c) A statement showing the financial position of the Union shall be published each year and a copy shall be sent to all members within six months of the end of each financial year.

ARTICLE X: AMENDMENTS, DISSOLUTION AND OTHER PROVISIONS

Section 1: Amendments
a) This constitution may be amended at any meeting of the General Assembly: provided always that no less than two thirds of the votes cast are in favour of the proposed amendment.

b) Subject to compliance with the next two following paragraphs, the Board of Officers shall place before the General Assembly any amendment proposed and signed by seven or more delegates.

c) Any proposal for a constitutional amendment must be in the hands of the Executive Director four months before the date of the General Assembly at which it is to be discussed.

d) The exact text of any such amendment must be circulated to all national and special members at least six weeks before the opening of the Assembly. The President may accept minor alterations to the wording of a proposed amendment which do not alter the intention or sense of the amendment.

Section 2: Dissolution

If, at any time, dissolution of the Union should prove necessary or desirable, this may be done according to the procedures laid down for amendments to this Constitution except that such proceedings must be initiated by a unanimous decision of the Officers or demanded by one third of the national members. In order to be valid, a decision to dissolve the Union must be taken by two consecutive ordinary General Assemblies of the Union.

Section 3: Other Provisions

By-laws may be drafted by the Executive Director or by the Officers but shall not come into effect until adopted by the Board of Officers. Any by-law will be invalid if inconsistent with the provisions of this Constitution.
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African Union of the Blind
Union Africaine Des Aveugles

Adopted by the

9th General Assembly,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
October 2019

Signed by order of the African Union of the Blind

President African Union of the Blind

This day of 6 May

Year 2021