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O11 - Connecting People through Astronomy: A Decade of Regional Cooperation, Education, and Outreach with the IAU South West and Central Asian Regional Office of Astronomy for Development (SWCA ROAD)

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Established in 2015 and hosted by the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory (BAO) in Armenia, the International Astronomical Union's South West and Central Asian Regional Office of Astronomy for Development (SWCA ROAD) has spent a decade connecting people and institutions through astronomy. Bringing together Armenia, Georgia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Türkiye, the Regional Office promotes cooperation across three interconnected pillars: professional astronomy, astronomy education, and public outreach.

Over the past decade, SWCA ROAD has developed a diverse programme of regional activities, including Regional Astronomical Workshops (RAW), Regional Astronomical Summer Schools (RASS), and joint workshops that bring together astronomers, educators, students, and outreach practitioners. These initiatives create opportunities for knowledge exchange, professional development, and the sharing of educational practices across national and cultural boundaries.

Institutional partnerships have further strengthened regional cooperation, including Memorandum of understanding with the Iranian Astronomical Society and the Georgian National Astronomical Observatory in 2025.

SWCA ROAD has also expanded its activities beyond its geographical region by fostering interregional collaboration. A key milestone was the First Inter-Regional Astronomical Summer School (1IRASS), organized in 2023 in collaboration with the Arab World Regional Office. Further engagement with regional offices and international institutions has created additional opportunities for sharing expertise, developing joint initiatives, and connecting astronomy communities worldwide.

This contribution reflects on SWCA ROAD's first decade, exploring how regional networks can connect people through shared scientific interests, strengthen astronomy education, and broaden public engagement with science. It highlights the importance of sustained partnerships, collaborative learning, and cross-cultural exchange in developing astronomy initiatives that respond to diverse regional needs. Looking ahead, SWCA ROAD aims to expand participation in regional activities, strengthen inclusive astronomy education and public outreach, develop a regional Virtual Observatory network for research and education, and foster interdisciplinary collaboration.

The experience of SWCA ROAD demonstrates how astronomy can serve as a bridge between communities, institutions, and cultures, creating opportunities for learning, cooperation, and wider public engagement. It offers insights into how regional and interregional partnerships can contribute to a more connected and inclusive global astronomy community.

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