

Communiqué de presse



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The SKA African bid - Participating States

mercredi 9 mars 2011 16:26 South African Square Kilometre Array Telescope Project Office

South Africa's success in performing Africa's first 'fringe detection' through a joint very long baseline interferometry observation in February 2011 has added significant momentum to the African bid for the Square Kilometre Array (SKA). The bid consists of nine partner countries, with South Africa taking the lead in the coordination and development of the project and Kenya, Mozambique, Botswana, Namibia, Mauritius, Madagascar, Ghana and Zambia all potentially playing host to SKA outstations on their territory.

The pan-African nature of the project has been acknowledged by the African Union (AU) as a vehicle for capacity building across the continent. At the 15th ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in July 2010, the AU recognised the importance of the science, technology and innovation emanating from the SKA project.

In Kenya, the authorities have recognized the importance of science and technology as an essential tool of socio-economic development and have consistently worked on ways of positioning the sector to be a driver of national development.

Namibia will host three SKA remote antenna stations. Namibia is already host to the world's leading gamma ray telescope. Situated near the Gamsberg nature reserve south of the capital Windhoek, the High Energy Stereoscopic System (HESS) is an array of four 12m telescopes probing cosmic gamma rays.

The University of Mauritius has been teaching undergraduate courses in astronomy for many years and has extended its existing post-graduate programme with the help of SKA South Africa. They have significant expertise in radio astronomy through the construction and operation of the Mauritius Radio Telescope; a synthesis radio telescope used to make images of the sky at a frequency of 151.5 MHz.

Ghana maintains a strong position within Africa's astronomy and astrophysics community, particularly through the presence of the African Physical Society headquartered in Accra. The African Physical Society, which is made up of physicists and mathematicians, agreed in January 2010 to fully support Africa's pursuit to provide a site for the SKA.

In Madagascar, the University of Antananarivo has opened courses on astronomy and astrophysics and will make use of existing facilities at partner universities and the observatory of Ankadiefajoro to develop these modules.

As a direct result of the African bid for the SKA, in Mozambique there are new courses in astronomy at the Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo, taught by a graduate of the SKA South Africa HCD programme. By summer 2010, 75 students had registered for courses in astronomy and astrophysics, accompanied by a growing demand for places on these courses.

In 2003 Zambia joined the Space Generation Advisory Council (SGAC) in order to represent the interests of the space-science community to the UN, national governments and specialist organisations regionally

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and internationally. SGAC Zambia seeks to promote space science both in schools and in the public domain in order to raise awareness and develop the next generation of astronomers.

Botswana will potentially host up to four SKA antenna stations under the current proposal for the African bid. Since 2009, a number of undergraduate programmes in astronomy and astrophysics have been opened at the University of Botswana with demand growing rapidly for involvement in these courses.

<http://www.ska.ac.za/>