

Q & A: Intel VP on Africa's suitability for SKA telescope

<http://www.itnewsafrika.com/2011/07/q-a-intel-vp-on-africa%E2%80%99s-suitability-for-ska-telescope/>

27 July 2011



Vice President and General Manager, EMEA at Intel corporation, Christian Morales

Vice President and General Manager, EMEA at Intel corporation, Christian Morales, discusses his company's involvement in the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) Africa project, as well as their commitment to the development of science and technology on the continent.

The Square Kilometre Array will be the world's largest and most sensitive radio telescope.

Sixty seven organisations in 20 countries, together with industry partners, are participating in the scientific and technical design of the SKA telescope which will be located in either Australia – New Zealand or Southern Africa extending to the Indian Ocean Islands. The target construction cost is €1,500 million and construction is scheduled to start in 2016.

ITNewsAfrica.com: Today (26 July) marks an [important milestone in South Africa's](#) bid for the SKA telescope. What is Intel's involvement and role in the SKA Africa project?

Christian Morales: Intel will be providing cutting edge hardware and software architecture and the development tools necessary to make this project succeed. We are looking at providing a flexible architecture that is capable of evolving in the future and developing a high performance computing system that is able to stream and process a huge amount of data. We will be relying on the best architecture available today with strong capacity and the most efficient energy consumption.

ITNewsAfrica.com: In your opinion, why is South Africa a good match for the SKA project?

Christian Morales: We have a great team here in South Africa under the leadership of Dr. Fanaroff, with the right expertise and project management skills. I believe Africa's value proposition lies in its location conditions, the passionate team behind the project and the government's support, which is key in projects of such scale. The SKA project needs a recommended base line of 3000 kilometers between centre and outstations and the partnership with other eight African countries makes this possible.

ITNewsAfrica.com: Will the SKA telescope be powered by green sustainable energy and could South Africa use this proposition to its advantage?

Christian Morales: We are talking about smart grids, which represent the optimization of high performance and energy consumption at the moment. Intel's aim is to provide the maximum of capacity and high performance with the lowest and most efficient energy consumption. In a project of this scale, redundancy is very important and an energy power back-up will be provided. In terms of green energy, the proposed photovoltaic solar energy field in the North West province, the chosen place for the SKA project, is an encouraging move.

ITNewsAfrica.com: How much is Intel investing, in terms of research and development funding, to the African region?

Christian Morales: Yes, absolutely. South Africa and Africa as a whole have seen the highest growth in the technology arena and is the most dynamic environment for Intel, with a tremendous evolution on both technology and education levels. Most of our R&D funds go towards Africa and it's a massive investment.

ITNewsAfrica.com: What is Intel's long-term vision for Africa and how will SKA Africa project contribute to it?

Christian Morales: The SKA Africa project deployment should be done by 2015 and we will be involved in the progress, with focused key milestone reports every six months. Regardless of the bidding result in 2012, we are very positive and we will continue to support the project. We are committed to promoting the R&D, math and science possibilities in the country and creating the excitement that will attract the younger generations towards science and technology.

ITNewsAfrica.com: What is Intel's strategy for Africa beyond 2011?

Christian Morales: We will focus on the technology and solutions needed to allow the next billion people, most of them in the African region, to connect to the Internet. This is instrumental in the processes of education and R&D. We are working with governments, telecoms, computer manufacturers and NGOs in bringing better connectivity and smart performance to the people in Africa. We are supporting the next generation networks 4G and LTE in Africa, with pilots of WIMAX projects already deployed, however this will take some time to reach a wider population, depending on the governments' regulations too.

ITNewsAfrica.com: Is cloud computing high on Intel's agenda?

Christian Morales: Definitely and the SKA project in itself is using massive cloud technology and hosted communications to collaborate effectively among its center and various outstations. Our second quarter results showed a growth of 50% for cloud computing services between last year and 2011 and this trend will continue in the near future.

ITNewsAfrica.com: What does the SKA project mean for the African IT industry?

Christian Morales: The SKA is an iconic project with state-of-the-art technology. We are aiming to demystify science and technology and promote these industries to students and younger generations. The project will aim for scaling this reach and it is a welcomed boost in the very competitive IT industry. Our aim is to win and show the African entrepreneurs and IT developers what is possible in Africa. It is not only a boost for the digital economy, it is a boost for many companies and technology developments on the continent.

ITNewsAfrica.com: Job creation is a major issue in South Africa at the moment. We know that there are such initiatives in the IT sector, such as Google's recently launched tech incubator Umbono

in Cape Town. How is Intel involved in boosting job creation and awareness in the South African IT industry?

Christian Morales: Intel has been actively involved in the local industry, integrating hardware manufacturers with software providers. We know that everything starts with education and we have invested in technology coaching and training for around 200.000 teachers in Africa, who will deliver interactive educational experiences and promote technology further to students and pupils. We are continuously investing in technology and providing funds through Intel Capital to start-ups and SMEs in the industry. These projects are supported by private investors and venture capitalist and we need this kind of initiatives to further commit to the country's technological development. By interacting with the press and media we can bring the word forward and commit to this cause. For example, right now there might be talented young people in Pretoria, passionate about IT and the development of IT solutions for Africa. It is important to support these people and provide a wide support for the technology sector in Africa, which shows a huge potential.

by Denisa Oosthuizen, Senior Reporter ITNewsAfrica.com