

SA seeks to strengthen radio astronomy partnerships with China

Deputy Minister of Science and Technology Derek Hanekom will lead a high-powered delegation to China this week with the aim to strengthen radio astronomy partnerships between South Africa and the world's second largest economy, Engineering News reports.

Hanekom would meet with his peer, Chinese Vice Minister of Science and Technology Cao Jianlin, as well as the African ambassadors of the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) radio telescope partner countries, and other interested parties in the business and science sectors. China is one of seven countries that has recently joined the SKA Organisation and is represented by the National Astronomical Observatory of China, part of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

"China's decision to join the SKA Organisation is proof of their recognition of the scientific and economic benefits that a science project of this magnitude can bring participating countries," the department said. Apart from South Africa and Australia, other signatories include Italy, New Zealand, the UK and the Netherlands, and - as a signatory, China has voting rights in the SKA site selection process. "We have full confidence in the integrity and efficiency of the SKA Organisation's site selection process and the independent scientific and technical evaluation process of course remains paramount...we are eager to foster cooperation with strategic partners such as China".

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