

Pandor: 'We are ready to host SKA'

According to South African Minister of Science and Technology Naledi Pandor, Africa is ready to host the Square Kilometre Array (SKA), Allafrica.com reports.

The Minister insisted that the African group of countries, which includes South Africa, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia and Zambia, has no intention of losing the SKA bid to Australia and New Zealand. "We have no other plans. Plan A, we are ready to host SKA. Plan B, we are ready to host SKA and Plan C, we are ready to host SKA," Pandor said.

The SKA organisation now considers their final decision on which country will host the array and the process for the allocation of a preferred site to host the SKA radio telescope is expected to be announced on April 4. Africa's bid to host the SKA was boosted by the European Union adopting Declaration No. 45 on Science Capacity Building Africa: Strengthening European-African Radio Astronomy Partnerships. "This demonstrates that key partners in European governments and industry share the perspective that not only does Africa have compelling geographic advantages for the hosting of radio astronomy facilities, but that our continent is an attractive and valued partner for science and innovation," Pandor said.

Pandor added that the announcement by South African Minister of Finance Pravin Gordan that the SKA project would qualify for VAT relief "further assured the investors who are willing to join the project to see South Africa as a good place of investing in African science and technology". According to Allafrica.com, the project has attracted some of world's biggest companies, like CISCO, SAP and Google. Chinese businesses have expressed interest in development as well.

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