

# SA promotes the African SKA bid abroad

"Africa is both the cradle of humankind and the continent of the future, and we are confident that we present an outstanding site and the best home for the SKA," stated South African Minister of Science and Technology, Naledi Pandor. She was speaking at a press conference at the World Congress of Science Journalists (WCSJ) in Doha, Qatar at the start of July 2011, giving them an insider's view of Africa's bid to host the Square Kilometre Array on the continent. SKA South Africa had a significant presence at the WCSJ, including a display stand and the very popular Mission MeerKAT comics.



SKA South Africa's information stand at the WCSJ 2011



The SKA SA project office took part in two major international scientific conferences recently to create awareness of the SKA and South Africa's participation in the international SKA project, including the proposal to host the SKA in Africa. The two conferences were the 11<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Regional IAU meeting (APRIM 2011) in Thailand (photo above), and the XXX<sup>th</sup> URSI General Assembly and Scientific Symposium (URSIGASS 2011) in Turkey. At the URSI GASS meeting Justin Jonas, Associate Director for Science and Engineering in the SKA South Africa project office, took over as Chair of Commission J (Radio Astronomy) from Subramanian Ananthakrishnan of India.

## SKA SA presentations in London – Youth Day 2011

"Revolutionary science on the continent of opportunity" was the title of a presentation by Dr Bernie Fanaroff at the South African High Commission in London on 16 June 2011 (as part of the celebration of Youth Day). A packed audience of scientists, journalists, policy-makers and diplomatic representatives heard about recent achievements in astronomy in South Africa. Attendees included Dr Richard Schilizzi, Director of the SKA Project Development Office (SPDO), academics from the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Southampton, Keele, Manchester and the Open University. Professor David Cope, Director of the Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology, Mr Colin Vincent and Mr Simon Berry from the Science and Technology Facilities Council, MP Mr Nigel Evans, Patron of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Space, MP Ms Chinyelu Onwurah, Shadow Junior Minister for Science and Technology, MP Mr Stephen Mosley, Science and Technology Select Committee and diplomatic representatives from Germany, France, China, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia, Australia and New Zealand.

Dr Fanaroff showcased the KAT-7 and MeerKAT telescopes and the South African proposal to host the SKA. He set out South Africa's experience in delivering large high-tech projects and explained how iconic projects like the SKA are attracting young people into science and engineering studies. The South

African government's commitment to building a knowledge economy was illustrated by the investment in bursaries for students from across Africa. In addition to working with global industrial partners, the South Africa SKA bid has also supported economic development in South Africa with emerging clusters of high tech companies. The exceptional radio quietness

of the Karoo site, protected by legislation and agreements with broadcasting companies and other radio operators, is a real asset for radio astronomy. Dr Fanaroff explained that South Africa provides real value because less cash spent on infrastructure and operating costs means more telescope for the money – a real advantage in times of tight public budgets.



Dr Fanaroff in conversation with British MP Mr Stephen Mosley