

Everyday EDI

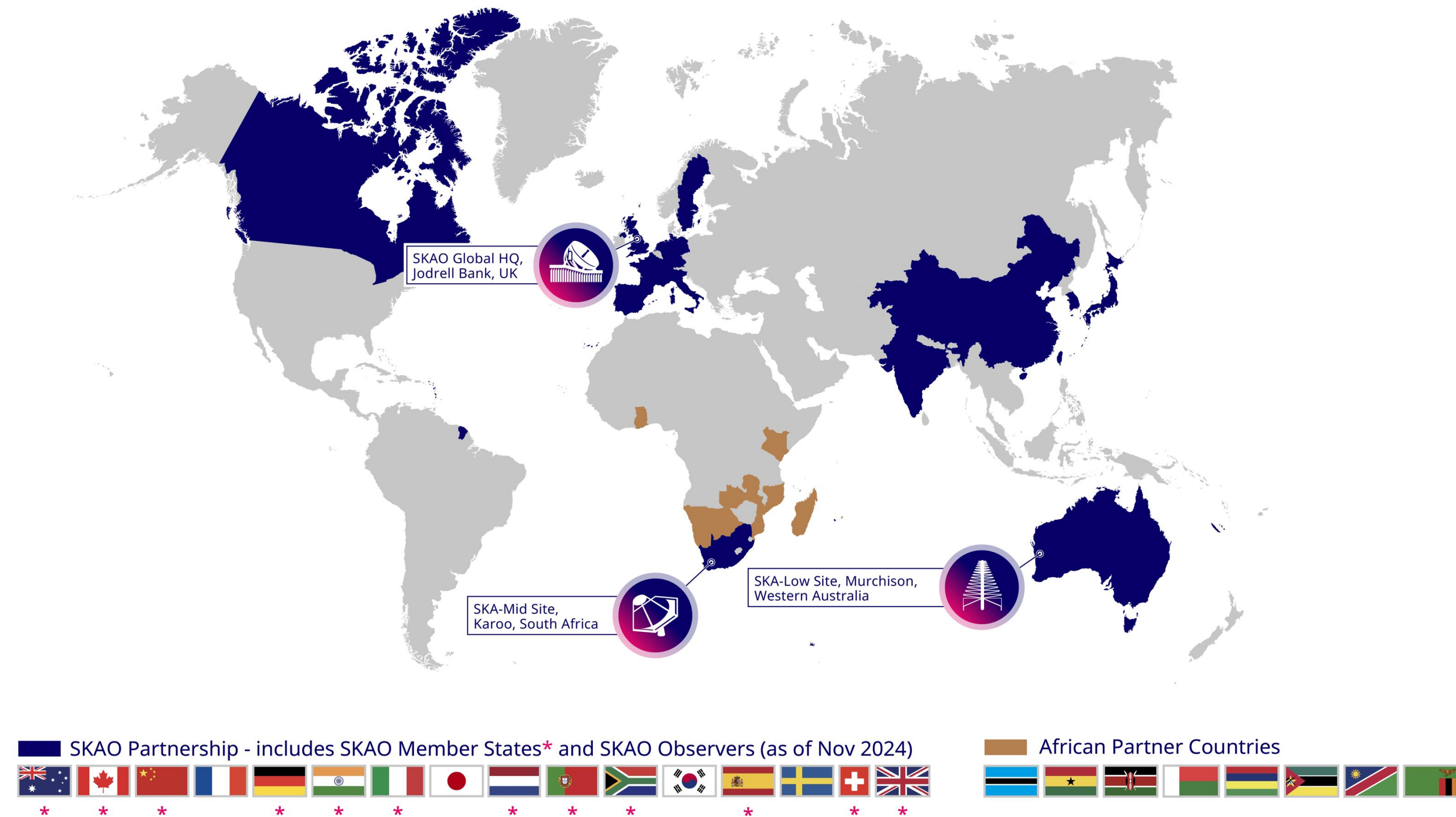
Embedding equality, diversity and inclusion
in SKA Observatory communications

Cassandra Cavallaro – SKAO Content and Media Lead

28 November 2024, PAERI

The SKAO – who we are?

- Global partnership of 16 countries on five continents
- Staff of 30 nationalities
- Collaborations with local and Indigenous communities
- EDI is at the core of the SKAO and makes it possible



The SKAO Convention

“COMMITTED to an organisation where diversity and equality are promoted and respected”

CONVENTION ESTABLISHING THE SQUARE KILOMETRE ARRAY OBSERVATORY

The Parties to this Convention,

DESIRING to deliver one of the most visionary and ambitious science projects of the 21st century involving significant international cooperation;

COMMITTED to testing the limits of engineering and scientific endeavour and to exploring fundamental questions in astronomy and physics;

NOTING that the Square Kilometre Array will be a next generation radio telescope facility that has a discovery potential far greater than any previous instrument;

RECOGNISING that the scale and ambition of the Square Kilometre Array demand a global effort with long-term investment;

EMBRACING the potential for scientific discovery to contribute to advances in technology and innovation and to deliver a broader benefit for industry and society;

DEDICATED to realising the full ambition of the Square Kilometre Array Project;

ACKNOWLEDGING the preparatory work done by the Square Kilometre Array Organisation in the establishment of the Square Kilometre Array Observatory;

COMMITTED to an organisation where diversity and equality are promoted and respected;

HAVE AGREED as follows:



Our values

- Observatory-wide commitment to EDI
- Diversity and inclusion among our core values
- Values linked to detailed behaviours document
- New gender equality plan
- Comms is one part of broader EDI activities



SKAO Gender Equality Plan



EDI in everything

- EDI is paramount in every Comms activity:
 - Print/web/social content
 - Panels, speakers and volunteers at events
 - Supporting materials for bids/applications
 - Internal communications
 - Partner content involving the SKAO



SKAO virtual work
experience speakers



The obvious: Global EDI days

- EDI calendar, marked Observatory-wide, externally and/or internally
- Locally important events also marked, spreading awareness across SKAO
- EDI days are important but can be seen as tokenistic
- Important to embrace EDI every day!

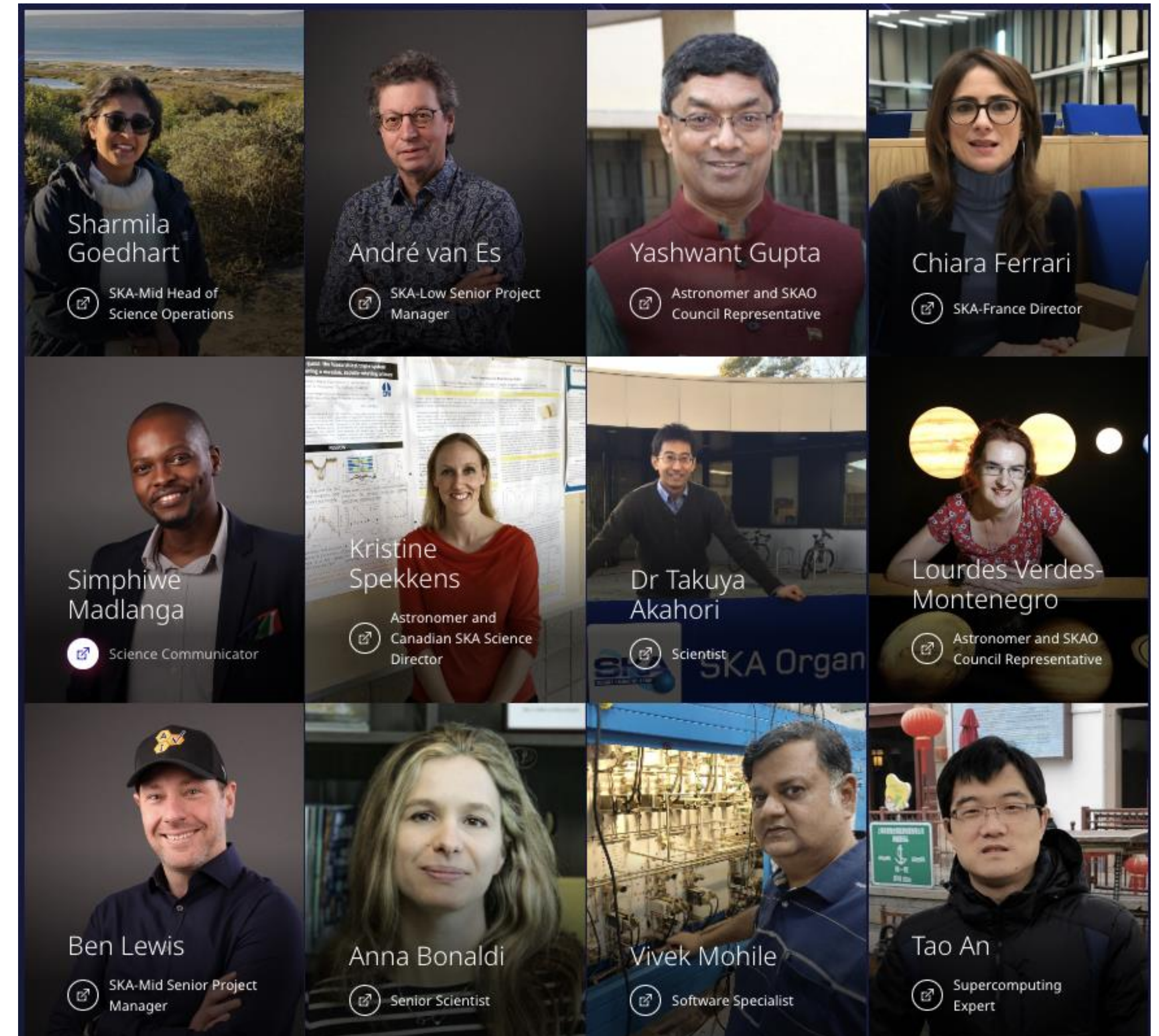
SKAO EDI calendar

- International Day of Women & Girls in Science
- International Women's Day
- International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- Global Accessibility Awareness Day
- International Women in Engineering Day
- International Pride Day
- International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
- World Mental Health Day
- International Day of LGBTQIA+ People in STEM
- International Day of Persons with Disabilities



The obvious: Staff profiles

- Ensuring we represent diversity in all its forms
 - Nationality, gender, ethnicity, age, seniority etc
- Goes beyond SKAO staff – inclusive of wider partnership “Team SKA”
- Choices are tied to news events/milestones



The less obvious

- All-women line ups where EDI is not the focus

SKA Observatory: exploring a universe of possibilities

 EVENT
09 August 2024, IAU General Assembly side event: Nerina & Protea CTICC 2

IAU General Assembly delegates are invited to attend a special, day-long event on Friday 9 August to hear the latest updates from the SKA Observatory (SKAO), the next-generation radio astronomy facility.



Heck yes!

• I've NEVER seen this in all my years in astronomy but this just shows that is possible if organisers are willing to put in the effort.



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- All-women line ups where EDI is not the focus
- Diversity in ALL products e.g. quotes, graphics

CONTACT

THE SKAO'S MAGAZINE

ISSUE 15 | APRIL 2024



The less obvious

- All-women line ups where EDI is not the focus
- Diversity in ALL products e.g. quotes, graphics
- Acknowledging and celebrating Indigenous cultures

COSMIC ECHOES

A SHARED SKY INDIGENOUS ART EXHIBITION



Australian and South African Indigenous artists explore creativity at the intersection of modern science and ancient wisdom



Celebrating Indigenous cultures

- “Nothing about me without me”
- Content referred for review via partners
- Including Indigenous representatives in events
- Cultural awareness training for staff
- Giving visibility internationally



Credit: Max Alexander



Indigenous acknowledgement

The logo for SKAO features the letters 'S', 'K', 'A', and 'O' in a bold, dark blue font. The letter 'A' is stylized with a white starburst in the center and a gradient of purple and pink. The letter 'K' is also filled with a purple-to-pink gradient. The letter 'O' is dark blue with three small white dots on its upper left curve.

We recognise and acknowledge the Indigenous peoples and cultures that have traditionally lived on the lands on which our facilities are located.



Authenticity

- How do we avoid tokenism?

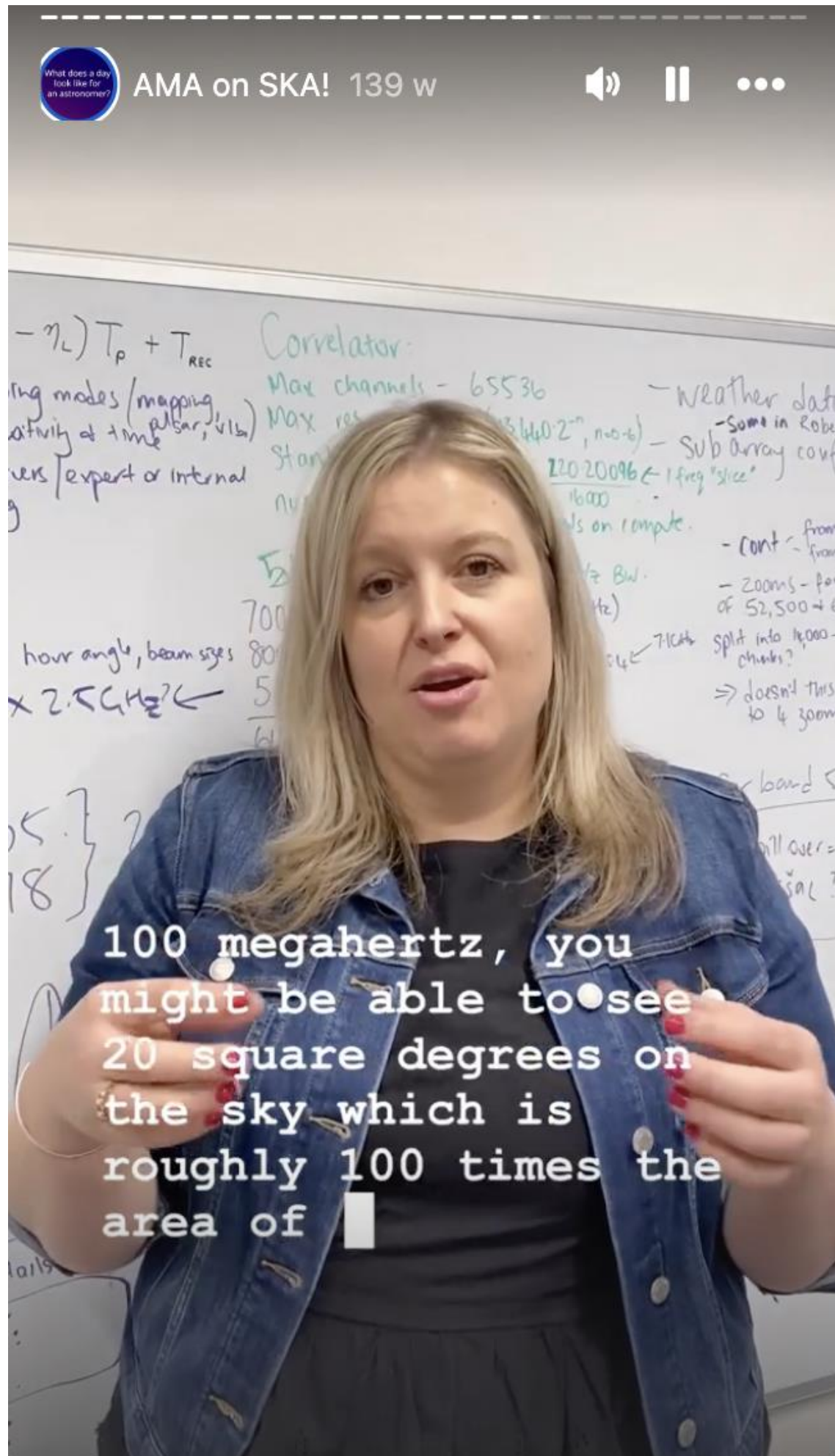


BEFORE



Authenticity

- Highlighting expertise, not just existence



Gusta Tshikhudo

Gusta Tshikhudo is an SKA-Mid senior telescope maintenance engineer working for SARAO and the SKAO in South Africa.



I love that I am part of the development of the products that are being built for our telescopes

International Women in Engineering Day 2023

#EnhancedByEngineering

“In engineering we solve problems on a daily basis. The outcome of the work we do transforms communities, societies and the world.”



Gusta Tshikhudo
SKA-Mid Senior Telescope Maintenance Engineer



Scroll down for video transcript

Tell us a bit about your background, Gusta.

I am the third-born in a family of five kids. I grew up with two brothers who were always investigating how things work by first breaking them apart. I enjoyed watching them struggle to put it all back together. The funny part is that I copied them and I managed to break my first computer! Thankfully the retailer did not ask many questions, they just replaced it. Choosing engineering as a career felt like a natural choice, I loved figuring out how things work and was always ready to solve a problem.

NOW



SKAO Speaker Series

SESAME and physics collaboration in the Middle East

Gihan Kamel

Infrared Beamline Principal Scientist for SESAME



Gihan Kamel is the Infrared Beamline Principal Scientist for SESAME, the Synchrotron Light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East, where she is responsible for beamline construction and operation.

She obtained her Ph.D. in Physics in 2011 from the University of Rome La Sapienza, and is now Assistant Professor in Physics at Helwan University in Cairo. Dr Kamel regularly speaks on her research, as well as using science for peace, science diplomacy, and women in science. To-date, she remains the only woman in a scientific role at SESAME.

A TEDxCERN speaker, she's been featured by Nature as well as the UN to speak on the challenges facing women in science in the Middle East, and has been recognised by the President of the Italian Republic for her achievements.

Tuesday 5 March 2024

10.00am UTC

[Click to access the Speaker Series talk here](#)



Authenticity

- For contributors
- Requires building strong working relationships – not only interacting when you want something EDI-related
- Explaining why they are being chosen
- Working in a consultative, collaborative way (ensure they agree with the messages)



Authenticity

- For contributors
 - Requires building strong working relationships – not only interacting when you want something EDI-related
 - Explaining why they are being chosen
 - Working in a consultative, collaborative way (ensure they agree with the messages)
- For audiences
 - Keeping content interesting and relevant
 - Communicate these messages year-round!





Doing actual things (not just social media)

- Easy to fall into the trap of “tick box exercise” on EDI days
- World Mental Health Day – wellness walk organised by staff, for staff
- Words backed by action = more genuine
- Planned as a regular event



Accessibility

- Alternative text on all images for web / social
- Closed captions / subtitles on all videos
- Website accessibility audit
- Trialling braille on public exhibits

 **SKA Observatory**  @SKAO · Oct 28 Promote ...

 Lots of activity on the SKA-Mid telescope site in South Africa! Here's the team preparing the base for another SKA-Mid dish and assembling the structure that will soon hold the 66 panels of its main reflector.

[@SKA_Africa](#) [@NRF_news](#) [#SKAconstruction](#)

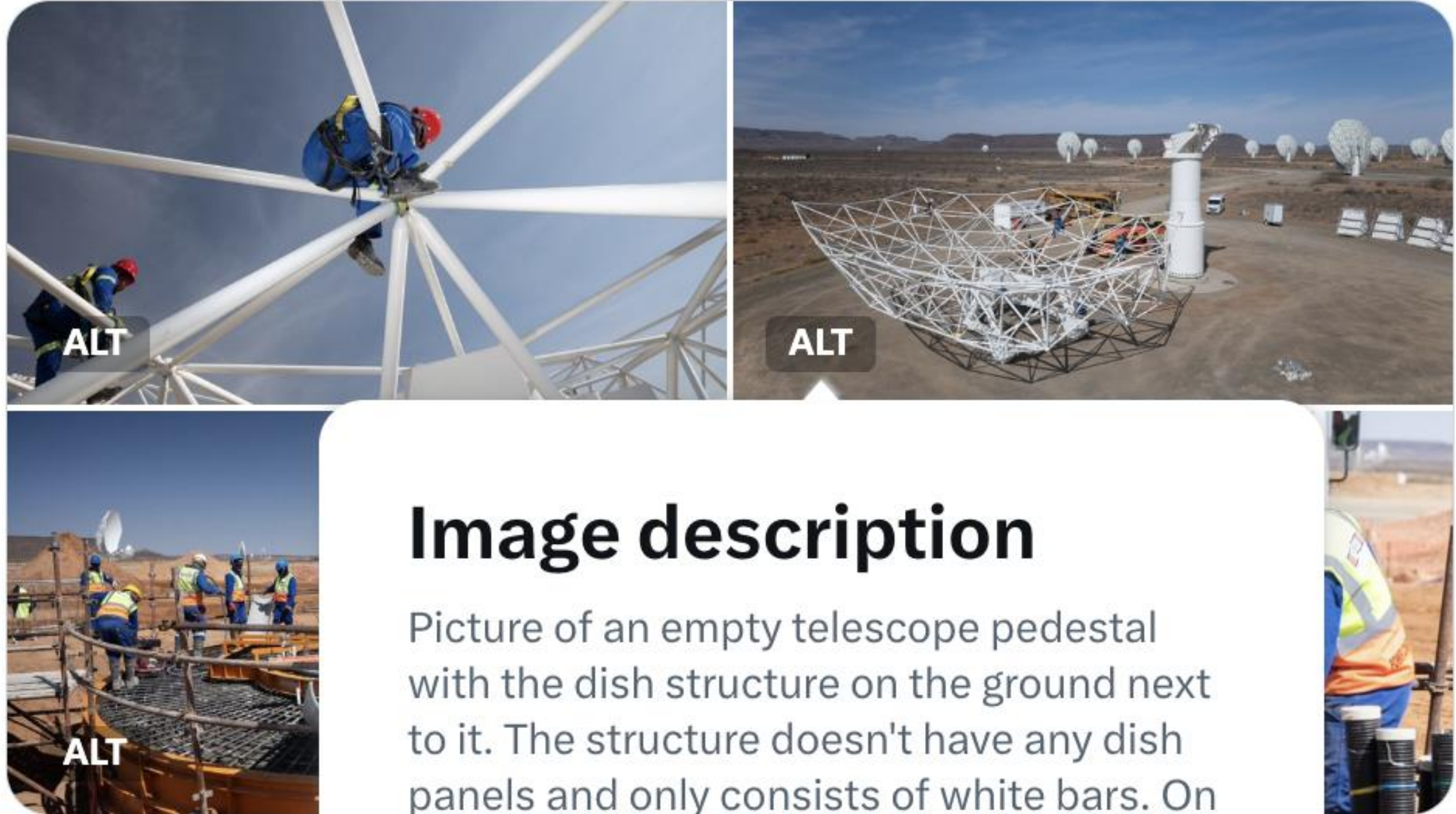


Image description

Picture of an empty telescope pedestal with the dish structure on the ground next to it. The structure doesn't have any dish panels and only consists of white bars. On the right in the background are several other working telescope dishes.

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Challenges in embedding EDI in Comms

- Lack of diversity in key positions and teams
 - Senior leadership not diverse = always hearing from the same people
- Getting buy-in from colleagues
- Burden for the same staff
- Requires more attention, more steps, investment of time, sometimes money



Backlash

 SKA Observatory
Published by Loomly

June 28 · 🌐

Happy International **#PrideDay!** 🏳️‍🌈

Did you know equality and diversity feature in the preamble to the SKA Observatory Convention, our founding document?

Diverse experiences and ideas help us to tackle some of the toughest challenges in science and engineering, and we're committed to making the SKAO a welcoming and inclusive place where everyone feels they belong.

Learn more about our values: <https://loom.ly/yJCzhJ4>

#equality #inclusion



“Stick to science please”

“Propaganda”

“This is a hyped topic of you PR department”

“Burn the rainbow flag and just get on with life” [Hidden]

“Unfollow 👎 👏”



Lessons learned

- Contingency planning
 - Video – no women present on site, all men featured. We could have filmed someone off site for balance
- Clear requirements
 - Delays waiting for closed captions because people didn't understand importance for accessibility
- Thinking creatively
 - Do we *need* to feature that person, or is it just easier/expected?
- Understanding that some things are beyond our control – but we keep trying!



Takeaways

- Embedding EDI means thinking about it every day, in every product and activity
- Asking the question: can we make this more inclusive/accessible/representative?
- Reminding people (also externally) this is a priority
- Being consistent in highlighting the issues



Thank you – any questions?

*We recognise and acknowledge the
Indigenous peoples and cultures that have
traditionally lived on the lands on which
our facilities are located.*

SKAO

www.skao.int