



**SAASTA**

South African Agency for Science  
and Technology Advancement

PO Box 1758  
Pretoria 0001  
South Africa  
Tel: (012) 392 9300  
Fax: (012) 320 7803  
Int. Code: +27 12  
info@saasta.ac.za

[www.saasta.ac.za](http://www.saasta.ac.za)

## Media Release

25 August 2017

### For immediate release:

### **National Schools Debates 2017 provincial competitions to focus on Square Kilometer Array Telescope**

Ten schools in Mpumalanga, Limpopo and Western Cape will pick up their proverbial telescopes and focus in on the Square Kilometer Array Telescope, a massive global science project, during the National Schools Debates provincial competitions on Saturday, 26 August 2017.

The National Schools Debates topic for 2017 is: *Can the investment of public resources in a mega-science project such as the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) contribute to the eradication of poverty and sustainable development in South Africa and the African continent?*

That's the question that will be in the minds of 90 Grades 9 to 11 learners from schools across the country for the provincial competitions which conclude on 9 September 2017. These learners will debate the question from four different perspectives around science and technology: Application and Benefit, Economic, Socio-Cultural and Political.

The contestants are only allowed to pre-prepare their opening statements but subsequent responses and closing speeches are prepared during the competition. The winning school from each province will compete in the national final in Gauteng against other provincial winners on 5 October 2017.

“VJC has been working closely with the Gauteng, KZN and WC MST Coordinators in order to recruit schools from mostly quintile 1-3 schools in order for learners from these schools to get exposure and gain valuable experience in science communication through the SAASTA National Schools Debates Competition,” said Ms Suma Jovner.

The competition aims to encourage young people to address key issues around science and technology that are faced by their communities, through the medium of debate. It also gives participants the opportunity to develop research, critical thinking and information literacy skills, as well as the ability to work as a team to present logical, clear arguments.

“The National Schools Debates is a unique and valuable platform where young minds have an opportunity to delve into deep scientific questions and to learn about the incredible science happening in South Africa” said Mr Michael Ellis, Manager of Science Communication for the South African Agency of Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA).

“Developing a culture that embraces science, engineering, technology and innovation is linked to the overall economic development of any country,” added Mr Ellis.

Conceived and hosted by SAASTA, a business unit of the National Research Foundation, the programme seeks to foster the confidence to speak about science in high school.

For more information about venues for the competition and contact details visit our website: <http://www.saasta.ac.za/competitions/national-schools-debates/>

**Ends**

## **Sidebar**

### **Provincial Debates tournaments**

26 August: Mpumalanga, Limpopo and Western Cape

02 September: North West, Free State and Gauteng

09 September: Northern Cape, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Eastern Cape

### **For interviews contact:**

Ms Lithakazi Masilela

Project Officer at SAASTA

Email: [lithakazi@saasta.ac.za](mailto:lithakazi@saasta.ac.za)

Telephone number 012 392 9352

### **Issued by:**

Mr Zamuxolo Matiwana

Media Coordinator at SAASTA

Email: [zamuxolo@saasta.ac.za](mailto:zamuxolo@saasta.ac.za)

Telephone number 012 392 9319

## **About the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA)**

SAASTA is a business unit of the National Research Foundation (NRF) with the mandate to advance public awareness, appreciation and engagement of science, engineering and technology in South Africa.

SAASTA’s contribution to the NRF’s vision is to grow the pool of quality learners today who will become the scientists and innovators of tomorrow.

It aims to be the leading science advancement agency in the country by promoting and communicating the value and impact of science, technology and innovation in a dynamic knowledge economy. It also intends to contribute significantly towards building a science, engineering and technology (SET) human resource base. For more information on the operations and programs within the NRF please visit [www.saasta.ac.za](http://www.saasta.ac.za)

**About the NRF:** The National Research Foundation (NRF) was established on 1 April 1999 as an independent statutory body in accordance with the National Research Foundation Act. The NRF is a key public entity responsible for supporting the development of human resources for research and innovation in all fields of science and technology. The organisation is one of the major players in educating and training a new generation of scientists able to deal with South African and African needs. The organisation encourages public awareness and appreciation of science, engineering and technology, and facilitates dialogue between science and society. Its vision is to contribute to a prosperous South Africa based on a knowledge economy. For more information on the operations and programs within the NRF please visit [www.nrf.ac.za](http://www.nrf.ac.za)