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DST and its entities take stand against xenophobia

The Department of Science and Technology (DST) and the entities that report to the Minister of Science and Technology, Naledi Pandor, met this morning, Tuesday, 21 April 2015, to express dismay at the ongoing attacks on foreign nationals residing in South Africa, and to express their support for the President's call for an immediate end to xenophobic violence.

Addressing the gathering, Minister Pandor said that science, technology and innovation in South Africa had benefited immensely from partnership with other African nations. She reminded staff that South Africa would not have won the bid to host the major portion of the world's largest radio telescope, the Square Kilometre Array (SKA), without the support of its African partners.

Apart from the obvious humanitarian concerns, the science community expressed consternation about how the xenophobic attacks could damage South Africa's national system of innovation, as the country's efforts to develop human capital for research and innovation have been considerably enriched by the eminent African scientists who have taken up senior positions in South Africa's universities and national science councils.

"Without the experience and expertise of these esteemed colleagues, who also fulfil the valuable role of mentors and guides to young South Africans, science and technology in our country would be very much the poorer. Let us also not forget that during their exile from South Africa, due to the denial of access to education opportunities by the apartheid regime, many South African scientists benefited from training and education in other African states," said the Minister.

The Minister emphasised that the generation of new knowledge through research and its applications for the benefit of society was a universal pursuit, and that the scientific enterprise was by its nature international. The values of partnership and solidarity among nations were essential for sustainable and equitable global development, and all discrimination based on nationality, gender, race or religion should be rejected outright.

"The outbreak of xenophobic attacks in our society violates the ethos of science as a force for global good. We are shamed by these incidents, and condemn them in the strongest possible terms," Minister Pandor concluded.

The DST will mount an enormous banner in its foyer for the employees of the Department and its entities to sign. Visitors will also be encouraged to sign the banner.

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