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| MEMORANDUM FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE |

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 509**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 24/02/2023**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 4 OF 2023**

**Dr W J Boshoff (FF Plus) to ask the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation:**

Whether he will furnish Dr W J Boshoff with the details on progress with regard to erecting a fence around the terrain of the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) telescope which would enable SANParks to commence with management of the land surrounding the SKA radio telescopes purchased by the SA Radio Astronomy Observatory, as well as enable neighbouring stock farms to operate without the challenge of unmanaged land, including the proliferation of problem animals, adjacent to their own small-livestock operations; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details? **NW554E**

**REPLY:**

1. The upgrading of the existing fence surrounding the land acquired by the South African Radio Astronomy Observatory (SARAO), which was recently declared as the Meerkat National Park, will enable SANParks to manage the land as an environmentally protected area and provide opportunities for multi-disciplinary research. It is in the best interests of all parties to commence with the upgrade of the fence as soon as possible, and SARAO has endeavoured to keep local stakeholders informed and explored mitigation measures in the interim.
2. SARAO was able to confirm funding for the Meerkat National Park Fencing (MNPF) project in December 2022. The funding was secured as part of the overall SKA funding support from the Department of Science and Innovation. The project team, in collaboration with SANParks, has prepared the required fencing specifications - which is approximately 223km long - and undertook a successful cost optimization workshop in early February 2023 to ensure value for money in the delivery of the project.
3. The tender documentation is currently being finalised and the tender will be advertised in early April through relevant procurement portals. The fence construction project is expected to last for about 30 months after the award of the contract. SARAO will continue to work with local stakeholders to address and mitigate risks during construction.