

## JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

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### **SA SATELLITE GOES TO SPACE**

It is now only one day before South Africa's SumbandilaSat launches into space atop a Russian Soyuz rocket at Baikonur in Kazakhstan.

The 81 kg microsatellite, which is about 1m x 0,5 m in size, will lift off into space on 15 September 2009 from the Baikonur space base where it is being integrated into the Soyuz rocket.

The R26 million low-orbit microsatellite is the result of a three-year integrated capacity and satellite development programme commissioned by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) in 2005, and carried out by Stellenbosch University's engineering faculty. This is the same organisation that developed SunSat which was launched in 1999.

The satellite was manufactured by the Black-empowered Sun Space and Information Systems (Pty) Ltd (SunSpace), South Africa's only manufacturer of satellite systems, and one of only two in Africa.

SunSpace developed out of the SUNSAT programme at the University of Stellenbosch, and manufactures high-value small- and medium-sized satellite systems for the local and international aerospace market.

The Minister of Science and Technology, Ms Naledi Pandor, is Kazakhstan to witness the launch.

Among the many benefits SumbandilaSat will offer South Africa are information that will assist in the effective management of disasters (floods and fires), food security (crop yield estimation), health (prediction of outbreaks), safety and security, water resources and energy security.

The satellite will orbit about 500km to 600km above the earth. Carrying high resolution cameras, it will produce images to be used for agriculture, mapping of infrastructure and land use, population measurement and the monitoring of dam levels, among other things, and stream this information to the Satellite Applications Centre (SAC) at Hartbeeshoek, near Pretoria.

The SAC will carry out the command and communications functions by tracking the satellite using a large dish antenna.

The launch of SumbandilaSat is set to strengthen South Africa's technological and innovation capability in space science and technology, as well as reinforce the country's role in national, regional and international space initiatives.

“Space technology is no longer the exclusive preserve of the developed economies of the north,” says **Ms Nonfuneko Majaja, Chief Director of Enterprise and Industrial Development at the Department of Trade and Industry (dti)**. “South Africa is taking up its rightful place in this and other advanced technology industries, and is proving to be an innovative and energetic player. SunSpace, in particular, aspires to be a role model for empowering and developing people from all backgrounds in the fields of science and technology,” adds **Ms Majaja**.

In an empowerment agreement that is set to take BEE to the stars, leading empowerment agency, the National Empowerment Fund (NEF), has approved a R50m deal to finance an ambitious growth and development phase for Sun Space.

The deal will see the NEF investing directly into SunSpace, the operating company, in support of the BEE consortium that owns 25% of the company’s equity, and is aimed at increasing capacity and improving competitiveness in the rapidly-developing aerospace market. The transaction includes a possibility of the NEF becoming a 30% shareholder in SunSpace within the next 5 years, possibly increasing the company’s Black ownership status to a 55% controlling stake.

Says **NEF Chief Financial Officer, Mr Andrew Wright**: “The attraction for the NEF in supporting this Black empowered business arose out of especially the strategic sector in which it resides, namely the Space sector, and the fact that it is supportive of the dti’s Space Programme which is being implemented as a result of the National Space Policy. The NEF also aligns its investment activity to the Industrial Policy framework plans of the dti and this is one such example. Further to this, in line with the specific mandate of the NEF, SunSpace already has an active Black empowerment ownership and management element and the NEF funding allowed an opportunity to structure a more efficient capitalisation structure for the Black shareholders and for the company itself.”

“Our further key strategic aims at the NEF, which are also in line again with those of government, include the need to create new industrial capacity in our transactions and not merely ownership transformation in isolation thereof. Sun Space is poised on receiving and delivering upon key government contracts, adding to their existing specialist design, technical and manufacturing capacity, *plus Sun Space is training and developing Black satellite engineers*, contributing also to government’s aim to develop skills and human resources. This really has materialised into a win-win result for Broad Based BEE.” adds **Mr Wright**.

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### **Notes to Editors: About the name Sumbandila**

SUMBANDILAsat is the name of South Africa's new low earth orbiting satellite that will be launched into space from a submarine in Russia in December 2006.

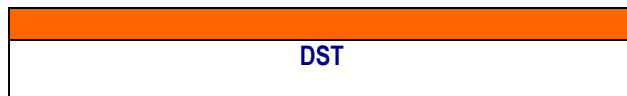
Meaning 'Lead the way' in Tshivenda, SUMBANDILA was among more than 3 000 entries received in a national competition launched by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) through the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA) earlier this year. "Name the satellite challenge" was open to all learners in grades 7-12.

The three winners, who all came up with "Sumbandila" are:

- Ofentse Khutswane (grade 7) from Laerskool Rachel de Beer, Pretoria
- Beki Boneni (grade 12) from Isilimela Comprehensive High School, Cape Town; and
- Benedict Ngidi (grade 9) from Brettonwood High School, Durban

They each received a computer, which was handed over to former the Minister of Science and Technology, Mr Mosibudi Mangena.

### **For Media Enquiries**



**NEF**

**Moemise Motsepe**

**(Marketing & Communications Manager)**

**083 533 4114 / 011 305-8127**

**[motsepem@nefcorp.co.za](mailto:motsepem@nefcorp.co.za) / [www.nefcorp.co.za](http://www.nefcorp.co.za)**