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PRESS RELEASE:

MMANTSAE M. DIALE AND NNENESI A. KGABI RETURNS FROM INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN BRAZIL

Mmantsae M Diale of the University of Pretoria and Nnnesi A Kgabi of University of North West in Mafikeng recently returned from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. They were part of about 145 delegates from 42 countries at the Second International Conference on Women in Physics. Delegates came from Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, and South America. Worldwide, fewer than 15% of physicists are women. More than 90% of the attendees at this conference were women.

Physics plays a key role in understanding the world we live in. The problem-solving skills of physicists are essential in many industries and to society at large. Because there are so few women in physics internationally today, no country benefits fully from the ideas and efforts women physicists could offer.

The conference featured updates on the situation for women in physics in all the countries plus had a poster session in which the attendees presented their research. The energy level, enthusiasm, and passion were uniformly high for physics, for contributing to their countries, and for increasing the numbers and advancement of women in physics.

It was clear that the scarcity of women in physics, especially in leadership positions, is a problem for many countries, which cannot benefit fully from women's ideas and approaches. Yet women alone cannot solve these problems. Men, institutions, and governments--need to work together with women to encourage, educate, recruit, retain, advance, and promote more girls and women in physics and other science and technology professions.

All attendees at the Rio conference agreed to take action in their countries to disseminate the conference results. They vowed to network with each other and to work actively to promote the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women of all races and nationalities in physics.

Since the 1st International Conference on Women in Physics, held in Paris in March 2002, more attention has been paid to including women in physics in many countries. Some progress has been made, and the number of women in physics has increased in many countries. In South Africa, we do not have correct statistics of Women in Physics and Mmantsae Diale is making efforts to have this corrected. A survey has been sent through SAIP to update the statistics. Thus far only UNISA, WITS, UPE, North West, UNISA and Pretoria have responded by presenting their statistics. The agenda is to have correct statistics ready at the next SAIP conference in Pretoria.

One of the breakthroughs of Women in Physics in South Africa is the Launch of Women in Physics conference

The Second International Conference on Women in Physics met in Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro

from 23 to 25 May, 2005. It was co-sponsored by the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics and governmental and private organizations in many countries, including. It was one of many events worldwide celebrating the World Year of Physics, WYP 2005 (for more information see <http://www.wyp2005.org>).

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