

FOURTH MEETING OF THE SOUTH AFRICA – EUROPEAN UNION JOINT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION COMMITTEE

2-3 December 2003, Brussels

IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

This report to provide an overview of activities undertaken to strengthen bilateral science and technology cooperation between South Africa and the European Union since the last meeting of the SA-EU Joint Science and Technology Cooperation Committee (JSTCC), held in Brussels in February 2002.

Collaboration focused on joint initiatives for South African participation in the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6) and a strengthening of the bilateral policy dialogue on the harnessing of science and technology for sustainable development, as well as cooperation in multilateral forums such as the World Summit on Summit on Sustainable Development and with the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States.

2. PREPARATION FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE SIXTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

2.1 The background information on the FP6 supplied to the South African delegation at the third JSTCC meeting was widely disseminated within the South African research community in order to raise awareness of the opportunities which the FP6, due to be launched in December 2002, would present. Subsequently, the Department of Science and Technology (DST) coordinated the submission by South African researchers of ***Expressions of Interest*** as part of the FP6 Expression of Interest exercise conducted by the European Commission. This

initiative greatly facilitated the South African participants' European partner-searching for FP6 participation and the identification of their strengths and competitive advantages.

- 2.2 At the invitation of Commissioner Busquin, Minister Ngubane attended and addressed the **FP6 launch conference** held in Brussels in November 2003. He was accompanied by a large delegation of South African research officials who also met for discussions with the Directorate-General Research. A special FP6 South Africa promotional event was presented at the South African Embassy in Brussels. Participation in the conference had not only served to better a large number of South Africans' understanding of the FP6 but also contributed to raise the profile of South Africa as a potential FP6 partner.
- 2.3 DG RTD and DST also conducted in November 2002 a countrywide series of **FP6 workshops** in major South African universities. These workshops were followed throughout 2003 by the regular organisation of FP6 briefing sessions conducted by officials from the Department of Science and Technology or visiting DG RTD officials. These briefing sessions were either generic FP6 presentations or focused on specialist focus areas such as the sustainable development thematic priority. The 2003 programme was concluded by a presentation of three FP6 success stories featuring the first successful South African participants. Initiatives were also undertaken to recruit project evaluators for FP6 in South Africa
- 2.4 The DST in 2003 prepared the terms of reference and published a call for the establishment of a South African Network of **FP6 National Contact Points** to mirror the similarly established networks in Europe. It is envisaged that the network will be formally launched in December 2003 and will significantly contribute to improve the technical advice and assistance

available to South African FP6 participants as well as the country's national networking ability to find European partners for FP6 consortia and beyond.

- 2.5 The DST also since October 2002 managed a **FP6 Seed Funding Instrument** whereby it funded preparatory activities undertaken by South African researchers to explore FP6 participation. To date more than 50 of these interventions have been funded for a total amount of more than R1 million. Several of these seed interventions also contributed to the successful South African participations in the first round of FP6 calls. The instrument also supported the visits of European experts to South Africa for FP6 preparatory meetings.
- 2.6 The DST furthermore, in line with a commitment announced at the third JSTCC meeting, created a **Framework Programme Matching Funding Instrument**. This instrument, which main objective is to optimally leveraged the benefit from South African participation in the Framework Programme, through a matching national investment to the funding allocated by the European Commission to the South African participants. The instrument has already been employed to fund three South African participations in FP5 thematic projects, which in terms of the FP5 rules did not qualify for EC funding.
- 2.7 DG RTD also regularly advised interested European and South African researchers on the availability of these instruments for cooperation and on opportunities and technicalities for participation in FP6 related funding opportunities as well as on relevant Member States activities
- 2.8 In terms of South Africa's commitment to deepen its science and technology partnership with the European Union, the DST recently funded the first-ever South African participation in an

activity (focused on bio-catalysis in this instance) of the EU's **Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST)** research programme. The investment in COST activities is also seen as a platform from which to promote improved Framework Programme participation.

- 2.9 The first results of South African participation in the first FP6 calls (i.e. those published in December 2002, the evaluation of which had only recently been completed) will be reviewed in detail by the fourth JSTCC meeting. It should be noted that as during the FP5, South African experts had participated in the FP6 evaluation panels. The results are encouraging in relation to the number of proposals submitted. South Africa having developed important stakes in most thematic priorities and kept its traditional role of excellence in development related science

3. **COLLABORATION IN MULTILATERAL FORUMS**

- 3.1 A highlight of collaboration over the past year had been South Africa's leadership within the **ACP Group of States** in developing a stronger focus on the harnessing of science and technology instruments for development, within the ACP-EU development cooperation partnership. Following South Africa's hosting of the ACP-EU Forum on Research for Sustainable Development in Cape Town in July 2002, Minister Ngubane, elected as chair of the Forum, led the political dialogue with European Commission and EU Member States interlocutors to concretise the outcomes and recommendations of the Forum. The first-ever dedicated ACP Science and Technology Capacity-Building Programme, which is currently being operationalised, is a direct outcome of the Cape Town Forum. Further progress is to be expected during the next months on the science and technology political dialogue.

- 3.2 South African and DG Research collaborated closely in presenting the **World Summit on Sustainable Development's Science Forum** in September 2002 in Johannesburg, one of the WSSD's main parallel events and highlights. A strong programme of experts interrogating the interface between science and technology, and all aspects of Science and Technology was arranged, which encouraged rich debate among more than 200 participants, and provided a complementary platform for supporting the Summit's political endorsement of the critical role of science and technology as an essential instrument for sustainable development. The Science Forum was concluded by a high-level Ministerial session which adopted as joint conclusions the Ubuntu Minute on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development.
- 3.3 South Africa and the European Commission have also collaborated closely within a drafting group, chaired by South Africa, tasked with preparing a Ministerial Declaration on International Science and Technology Cooperation for Sustainable Development, due to be adopted by the Ministerial Conference of the **Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's** Committee for Scientific and Technological Policy due to be held in January 2004. This initiative is a direct response to concretise the political commitments made at the WSSD.
- 3.4 In July 2003, South Africa and the European Commission were elected as Co-Chairs, with the United States and Japan, of the new international **Group on Earth Observations (GEO)**. The objective of the GEO is to develop a ten-year Implementation Plan for the creation of a new international comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable earth observation system. South African experts have in this regard been exploring participation

in the EU's Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES).

- 3.5 A close policy dialogue was also maintained on the development of the science and technology programme of the ***New Partnership for Africa's Development*** (NEPAD). A European Commission expert, thus, participated in the NEPAD science and technology workshop hosted by South Africa in February 2003 as well as a NEPAD Conference organised by the National Advisory Council on Innovation (NACI) in October 2002.

4. **OTHER COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES**

- 4.1 A European Commission representative is serving on the South African Reference Group for ***Women in Science***, an initiative which has contributed significantly to a mutually enriching policy dialogue on addressing the gender imbalances in research.
- 4.2 In May 2002 a South African delegation participated in the Global Research Networking Summit hosted by the European Commission. Building on these initial contacts made, and greatly facilitated by Minister Ngubane's attendance of both the European Commission's IST2002 and IST2003 (Information Society Technology) conference, significant progress has been achieved in negotiations with both DG Information Society and the operating consortium Dante, to enable the connection of a South African National Research Education Network to the high-speed European ***research network, GEANT***. These processes should be finalised in 2004.
- 4.3 There has also been a concerted effort to prepare South African participation in the ***European Developing Country Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP)***. The DST and the National Department of Health are for example collaborating in the

appointment of a South African coordinator to guide and direct the country's response to the opportunities provided by the EDCTP. South African institutions have also participated in the bidding process for the Africa Branch Office of the EDCTP.

4.4 In June 2003 the DST appointed Dr Mandi Mzimba as South Africa's **Senior Science and Technology Representative** based in Brussels. One of Dr Mzimba's priority objectives is the strengthening of relations with the European Commission and other Brussels-based interlocutors in order to promote South Africa's Framework Programme participation.

4.5 The EC delegation in Pretoria has increasingly been involved in S&T cooperation matters and will expand this portfolio of activities further

5. **CONCLUSION**

Commissioner Busquin visited South Africa in September 2003 and although he unfortunately could not meet with Minister Ngubane, during a meeting with the Director-General of the DST, Dr Rob Adam, had the opportunity to review the status of the bilateral SA-EU partnership. The meeting concluded that although the current strong bilateral relationship offers significant benefits to both parties, as evidenced by the above review of activities over the past two years, there was ample scope to further deepen and optimally leverage a most strategic partnership.