

# Remarks by Minister Mosibudi Mangena at the celebration of Ten Years of S&T Partnership with the European Union

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Venue:

Cape Town

Programme Director

EU Commissioner for Science and Technology, Commissioner Potocnik

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very honoured and pleased to celebrate with you ten years of a fruitful research, science and technology partnership between South Africa and the European Union. Europe has been a most valuable partner in our quest to build a highly effective National System of Innovation in the democratic era in South Africa.

Today we celebrate a highly significant relationship in addressing global challenges. Key among these has been climate change, which we have together sought to contribute through participating in multilateral fora such as the Group on Earth Observation.

The Framework Programme has also given us the platform to create opportunities to enhance our relationship.

Of extreme importance to South Africa, and indeed the entire African continent, is the question of health. The European and Developing Country Clinical Trial Partnership Programme or as it is commonly referred to, the EDCTP has helped cement our partnership in building a knowledge base to fight HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The African office of the EDCTP, which is based at the Medical Research Council here in Cape Town, enjoys support from my department and the Department of Health. This is a clear indication of the importance of science and the knowledge produced in its pursuit in the policy arena.

The location of the Third International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) campus in South Africa, which you will visit later this afternoon, Commissioner, of course provides us additional resources for cooperation in the health domain.

Today we celebrate ten years of a successful agreement on science and technology, concluded between South Africa and the European Union in 1996. This was the first intergovernmental agreement between South Africa and the EU, and it came into force in November 1997.

One of the benefits we have enjoyed from this agreement is the opportunity it afforded South African researchers to participate fully in the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Technology Development. The privileged partnership, which was established under the Agreement, complemented the longstanding political, economic and development cooperation ties between South Africa and the European Union.

Thus ten years of mutually beneficial cooperation under the Agreement, and very successful South African participation in the Framework Programmes has significantly contributed to enriching the global knowledge base, supporting human resource development, and significantly contributed to improving the quality of lives of our respective citizens.

The centrality of science and technology in the partnership between South Africa and the European Union has been recognised and in fact, given increased relevance in the recent revision of the SA-EU bilateral Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement.

The SA-EU S&T cooperation is further supported within the ambit of the European Programme for Reconstruction and Development (EPRD) in South Africa.

Commissioner, we believe the achievements of the past ten years do indeed give us cause to celebrate, and to be proud of our collective success. South Africa is proud to be one of the most active and successful Third Country participants of the EU's Framework Programmes.

South African researchers participated in more than 100 research projects under the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Framework Programmes. Participation in the Sixth Framework Programme proved to be most successful, with close to 140 participants in thematic areas, including Aeronautics and Space, Transport and the Citizens and Governance in the Knowledge-based Information Society priority areas.

We have been able to use this partnership to foster innovation in how we support researchers in South Africa for their enhanced participation and benefit. In this regard, we are proud of the role played by the European-South African Science and Technology Advancement Programme or ESASTAP in providing a platform for enhancing this partnership. This has led to the gains we made particularly in the FP6 round.

Through ESASTAP, we are now seeing increased participation also from the private sector in the FP7, in addition to the traditional participants from universities and science

councils. This is a promising sign, and we shall be working very hard to ensure more private sector participation.

This is aligned with the expected outcomes in our Ten Year Plan for Innovation, which is essentially our next phase in building the South African NSI.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to express my appreciation to the national contact points, without whose dedication to this work we would not be in a position to celebrate. These passionate men and women - affectionately referred to as NCP's - constitute the main structure providing guidance, practical information and assistance on all aspects of participation in the Framework Programme. Their dedication and sacrifices to ensure that South Africa does become a key player in the global science arena have not gone unnoticed.

We now stand at the cusp of a new era, where we have a greater responsibility to use our partnership as a powerful force for advancing multilateral efforts to address the shared global challenges encompassing other regions of the world. In this regard, let me take this opportunity to acknowledge the role played by the SA-EU partnership to support the African S&T agenda. Of special importance is the cooperation within the context of the EU support for implementing Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action.

One of the stars in the constellation of our projects together is the Network for the Coordination and Advancement of Sub-Saharan African-EU Science and Technology Cooperation. Through this project, one of the so-called INCO-Nets, we shall increase and improve cooperation in science and technology between the European Union and sub-Saharan Africa.

We already have a framework for cooperation in a multilateral fashion with the inclusion of other regions such as the Caribbean and Pacific.

As I end these few remarks, Commissioner, let me take this opportunity to congratulate you on the recent honour bestowed on you; that of having the galaxy called NCG-134 named after you. You will be interested to know that you are now visiting the Cape where the galaxy was first discovered by Sir John Herschel.

On the subject of galaxies and stars, I should also note that astronomy is indeed one of the flagship areas for SA-EU science cooperation. Several EU Member States have invested in the Southern African Large Telescope, the biggest single optical telescope in the Southern Hemisphere.

We also greatly appreciate the support the European Commission is providing, through FP7 and the European Strategy Forum for Research Infrastructures (ESFRI), to the development of the global Square Kilometre Array (SKA) project. South Africa is one of the candidate sites to host the SKA, but above all we are fully committed to contributing resources and expertise to ensure the successful realisation of this exciting project.

Who knows, ten years from now, a future European Commissioner for Science and Research, during a visit to South Africa for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Agreement, may also have an astrophysical phenomenon named after him, following a visit to the SKA - perhaps located in our Northern Cape Province...

On that hopeful note, ladies and gentlemen, I am honoured, on behalf of my country, the government and its people, to celebrate what has been a fruitful ten-year relationship. We look forward an even more prolific ten years to come.

Thank you very much for your attention.