

Conclusions of the Water Research for Sustainable Development Seminar convened as Side Event to the European Union – South Africa Summit on 24 July 2008, Bordeaux, France

The Government of the French Republic, the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the European Commission convened the Water Research for Sustainable Development Seminar in order to highlight the strong science and technology partnership between South Africa and the European Union. Organised as a side event to the first European Union – South Africa Summit, it focused on how to enhance the contribution of the science and technology partnership to global sustainable development challenges, specifically related to water. The participants to the seminar agreed on the following conclusions to be presented to the South Africa – European Union Joint Science and Technology Cooperation Committee's consideration and for further action as appropriate.

Conclusions

- (1) The Seminar emphasised participants' commitment to cooperate in research and innovation partnerships to address global sustainable development challenges, specifically those affecting the African continent. Within this context they agreed on the importance of the intensification by the European Union and South Africa of their scientific and technological cooperation.
- (2) The Seminar encouraged research organisations in South Africa and the European Union to strengthen their activities on water, which is a critical common good. The participants recognised that water is a vital resource for life and development. However, this critical common good is threatened by diminishing resources, difficulties in access, poor quality and health risks, as well as inappropriate management and global change.
- (3) The Seminar, through its multidisciplinary approach, identified the following priority research themes for water research cooperation between South Africa and the European Union:
 - a. Water and its use for agriculture, specifically for food security, including questions related to environmental protection as well as urban and rural planning within the context of competition for scarce resources;
 - b. Water and human health, including questions related to quality and safety, as well as water-borne diseases;
 - c. Water and the economy, including questions related to access and industrial use;
 - d. Water, integrated management and global change, including socio-economic analysis and the use of e-Infrastructures and Earth observation for modelling and mapping.
- (4) The Seminar specifically called on European and South African researchers to step up their efforts to develop water resource inventories and availability predictions, especially for those African regions most at risk, and to improve management instruments and modalities for different water uses such as those related to agriculture or water provision in metropolitan areas.
- (5) The Seminar also called on the European Union and South Africa to strengthen cooperation between European and African researchers, using all appropriate instruments, especially in the context of the Science, Information Society and Space Partnership of the Joint Africa – European Union Strategy, as adopted at the Africa – European Union Summit held in Lisbon in December 2008. The Seminar further encouraged support for the scientific coordination efforts undertaken by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in the field of water research as well

as the development of the scientific agenda of the Southern African Development Community (SADC.)

- (6) Specifically the Seminar recommended to include in the Seventh Framework Programme Specific International Cooperation Actions (SICAs) focused on water research cooperation between South Africa and the European Union involving other African partners, and targeting the research questions included in the Annex attached hereto.
- (7) The Seminar also highlighted the importance of leveraging development cooperation instruments, such as the European Development Fund, or adapting existing instruments of the Seventh Framework Programme, to invest in developing countries' science and technology capacity-building, including human capital and scientific infrastructures' development , with a special focus on water research.
- (8) Participants committed themselves to make use of all relevant opportunities to undertake joint research and development projects involving their respective research communities. This could include the pooling of resources such as Earth observation platforms and bio-chemical and physical analyses.
- (9) In conclusion the Seminar stressed the importance of a concerted global effort to invest in knowledge generation on water resources, uses and quality, and for all parties to contribute to developing instruments to improve the preservation and utilisation of water as a shared, high-value good for all humanity.