



## Joint Press Release

Ministry of Science and Technology of the Republic of South Africa  
European Commission Delegation to the Republic of South Africa

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.../for immediate release

### **South Africa – European Union** **Science and Technology Committee agrees to intensify cooperation**

*The 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the South Africa – European Commission (EC) Joint Science and Technology Cooperation Committee (JSTCC) was held in Pretoria, South Africa on 5-6 May 2008. The JSTCC is tasked to review scientific and technological cooperation between South Africa and the EU and to develop initiatives to improve collaboration. Senior South African and European delegations, respectively led by the Director-General of the South African Department of Science and Technology (DST), Dr Philemon Mjwara, and the Director General of the European Commission's Directorate General Research, Mr José Manuel Silva Rodríguez, accordingly met for this purpose at the 2008 JSTCC meeting.*

Prior to the JSTCC, both EC and SA delegations celebrated South-Africa's connection to GEANT, the world's largest computer network dedicated to research and education, in presence of Mr Antti Ilmari Peltomaki, Deputy Director-General of the European Commission's Directorate General Information Society. The celebration occurred through a live radio astronomy experiment at Hartebeesthoek Radio Observatory Astronomy.

The JSTCC took note with satisfaction of the successful participation over the past year by South African researchers in the first rounds of the EU's 7th Framework Programme for Research. So far, there had been 47 South African participations in FP7, with the South African participants receiving a total amount of just over €6 million in funding.

Of special importance was the successful South African participation in the highly competitive aeronautics and air transport, as well as in nuclear energy. The latter projects included the participation of South African organisations such as SASOL and the South African Nuclear Energy Corporation. The JSTCC noted the progress to broaden the range of South African Framework Programme participants to also include industrial partners, beyond South African universities and public-funded Science Councils, which were already participating with success in the Programme.

Looking towards the future, the JSTCC agreed on a number of targeted initiatives to promote future FP7 cooperation in specific FP7 thematic priorities, e.g. health research (poverty related communicable diseases); food, agriculture and fisheries, and biotechnology; environment (climate change and sustainable development) and information and communication technologies (ICT). Both parties agreed to strengthen cooperation in the field of research and education networking, notably through the interconnection between the South African National Research and Education Network (SANReN) and the European GEANT2 network.

Both parties agreed to undertake renewed efforts to promote exchanges of South African and European researchers using FP7 mobility instruments such as the Marie Curie fellowships.

South Africa and the European Union will also cooperate closely in supporting the implementation of the Science, Information Society and Space Partnership of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy adopted at the Africa-EU Summit held in Lisbon, Portugal, in December 2007.

The JSTCC provided an opportunity for the parties to inform each other of important science and technology policy developments. The South Africa side for example briefed the European Commission on the implementation of South Africa's Ten-Year Innovation Plan and the creation of the Technology Innovation Agency, whilst the European Commission provided an update on the evolution of various European Research Area policy initiatives.

Both sides committed themselves to work for the further growth of their cooperation as well as the deepening of their S&T policy dialogue, especially with regard to the harnessing of knowledge and innovation for sustainable development and poverty alleviation in Africa.

*"South Africa's science and technology partnership with the European Union remains a top priority for the DST. Not only is our cooperation an essential instrument to ensure South African researchers' participation in global scientific endeavour of the highest level of excellence, but it is also a truly mutually beneficial engagement. Indeed, South African expertise and experience are valuable contributions to joint efforts with Europe to address shared global challenges"* commented the DST's Director-General, Dr Philemon Mjwara.

*"Since 10 years, the S&T cooperation between the EU and South Africa consistently deepened and expanded. I am confident that our cooperation will grow from strength to strength over the coming years"* said the European Commission Director General for Research, Mr José Manuel Silva Rodríguez

**Background:** Since the signature in 1996 of the Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation between the European Union and South Africa, a rich and diverse S&T partnership has been fostered. South Africa was indeed one of the top international participants in the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6). South African researchers took part in 117 international projects, with the South African participants receiving a total amount of 13.856.655 EUR, ranking it fourth, behind the United States of America, The People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation, in terms of successful FP6 participation by non-EU countries.

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