



EUROPEAN UNION  
Delegation to the Republic of South Africa

**LAUNCH OF THE  
INNOVATION FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME:  
SECTOR BUDGET SUPPORT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE &  
TECHNOLOGY**

**Ndebele College of Education, Siyabuswa: Friday 17 September 2010**

**Address given by Ambassador L Briët  
Delegation of the European Union to South Africa**

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Honourable Minister Pandor,  
Premier of Mpumalanga  
The Executive Mayor of Nkangala District Municipality  
The Mayor of Siyabuswa Local Municipality  
His Majesty King SJ Mahlangu  
Representatives of the EU Member States and Donor Community  
Senior Government Officials  
Learners  
distinguished guests,

Programme Director

1. What a wonderful occasion that brings us all together today. At the end of an intense week, dominated by the high level South Africa - European Union Joint Cooperation Council, today's celebration is the proverbial "cherry on top". As you may know, the JCC provided the platform for our continued dialogues on science, technology and ICT development.
2. It is well timed to launch this important sector policy support programmes at this point – a programme that will challenge its implementers to bridge the divide between, on the one hand, science, technology and innovation, and on the other hand,

Government's aim of eradicating poverty and creating jobs – matters that I will return to a little later.

3. 2010 has turned out to be rather event-filled. I need not tell you about the wonderful World Cup that you were able to give the world apart, perhaps, from again saying: Congratulations and Thank You!

2010 will also be remembered as the year in which the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force and set in motion a series of profound changes in the way the European Union conducts itself and its business – both internally and externally. I may add that the timing of these changes coincides with an enlarged Union's increasing need for coherence and accountability – just think of the fall-out and impacts of the recent financial crisis and its impact on most governments' poverty reduction programmes.

Notably, 2010 also marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement, the legal basis that regulates EU-SA cooperation. Much has been achieved between ourselves since we formalised our relations after the birth of democracy in 1994.

4. I am proud that we have achieved a partnership of equals, given expression through the SA-EU Strategic Partnership: our political dialogue is regular and substantive and no less than sixteen areas of dialogue and cooperation are up and running. As noted earlier, these include science and technology, but also environment, energy and development cooperation.
5. On the issue of development cooperation the EU has committed itself to working with partner countries to speed up progress towards meeting the Millennium Goals in 2015 and beyond. This requires that all partners, including the EU, deliver more and better quality aid with an improved developmental impact.
6. Minister Pandor, as you are aware, our involvement in the Science and Technology sector has come a long way – looking back I can confidently say that together we have established a firm foundation on which we must seek to build an even stronger cooperative partnership with the relevant sector role-players in South Africa.

7. The first intergovernmental Agreement concluded between South Africa and the European Union, namely the Agreement on Science and Technology Cooperation signed in 1996, afforded South African researchers the opportunity to participate fully in the EU's Framework Programmes for Research and Technology Development. We are currently in the implementation period of the **7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development**, which will be implemented until 2013. FP7 (as it is widely known) co-funds research and development projects under four main headings: Co-operations, Ideas, People and Capacities. To date, over €13 million has been allocated to South African research projects under this initiative.
8. In 2009, additional EU funds were made available under the Reciprocal Agreement between South Africa and the **European Cooperation Programme for Science & Technology (COST)**. This programme aims to enable European researchers to undertake short-term scientific missions to South Africa. The Department of Science and Technology has become an active partner by similarly making funds available to South African researchers undertaking scientific missions to Europe. COST is Europe's oldest programme in science and technology networking and we are particularly proud of the achievement of this initiative and that we could broaden its scope to include South Africa.
9. Minister, another form of academic exchange supported by the EU is the very prestigious **Erasmus Mundus Partnership**. This is an international cooperation and mobility programme in the field of higher education that aims to enhance the quality of higher education and to promote dialogue and understanding between people and cultures of Europe and Third Countries. Since late 2009, South African and European Universities are now able to form consortia that will enable the mobility of South African students and academics to Europe.
10. Today, I am proud to say, we take another step in deepening our partnership in the science and technology sector. It is my privilege to stand alongside you Minister and announce our €30 million **Innovation for Poverty Alleviation Sector Policy Support Programme** - the first of its kind funded by the European Union.
11. This Sector Policy Programme has the overall objective of contributing to the Department of Science and Technology's policy and strategy of using science and

technology to reduce poverty through job creation, SME development, economic growth and the improvement of quality of life. It is aimed at the implementation of not only the National Research and Development Strategy, but also the new 10-Year Innovation Plan, formulated to help drive South Africa's transformation towards a knowledge-based economy, in which the production and dissemination of knowledge leads to economic benefits and enriches all fields of human endeavour.

12. Within the overall objective, the programme will contribute in the following focus areas identified by the Department of Science and Technology:
  - 1) Enhancing the development of sustainable livelihoods as well as sustainable economic development, including support to the Farmer-to-Pharma (with a PH) interventions and the development of the green economy;
  - 2) Improving human settlements with a focus on access to basic and social services;
  - 3) Developing, establishing and improving science, technology and innovation infrastructure, including ICT services and applications (including information services, space applications and geographic information systems);
  - 4) Developing human capital, including the promotion of youth participation in science and technology;
  - 5) Improving South Africa's response to global environmental challenges, including biodiversity and climate change, and
  - 6) Improving institutional capacity and regional collaboration.
  
13. We trust that, through our support to this initiative, we will contribute to the South African Government's strategic priorities stated in the Medium Term Strategic Framework (appropriately titled: "Together doing more and better"). These priorities include (and I highlight only a few):

- 1) Recognising that science and technology innovation and development are important sources of industrial competitiveness and sustaining growth;
  - 2) Broaden access to post-secondary education and improve higher education throughput rates that will contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of the country, by especially addressing the current skills shortages and promoting students to progress up to post-graduate level in all fields of study, and
  - 3) Speeding up growth and transforming the economy to create decent work and sustainable livelihoods.
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14. We are eager to engage with your Department and its partners, Minister, in a process of structured and focused policy and/or sector dialogue, focused on poverty eradication and the role that science, technology and innovation should play in the upliftment of communities in need. We are confident that the EU could add value to your ongoing discussions and good policy leadership. We look forward to a vibrant and lively debate that will not only enrich the South African science network, but equally those in the European Union.
  15. Today is also about celebrating and showcasing the close link between science, technology and education and the innovative products that could be developed and implemented here in South Africa. The Wireless Mesh Network Pilot Project is an excellent example of how broad band connectivity and the implementation of tested business models can contribute to the government's objectives of entrepreneurship promotion, rural-based economic development, accessible education, improved government service delivery and, ultimately, poverty alleviation.
  16. In addition, our passion for education has led us, the EU, to work on a new sector policy support programme with the Department of Primary Education. I see endless possibilities on how science, technology and innovation could assist in, for example, achieving universal primary education in South Africa.

17. Programme Director, in closing, I must praise the efforts of all those involved in the programme:

The Honourable Director General's strategic stewardship of the Department has been invaluable to this Programme.

We deeply appreciate, specifically, the active role that the Deputy Directors General of Programme 3 (Dr Thomas Auf der Heyde) and Programme 5 (Ms Marjorie Pyoos) and their staff.

Minister, thank you also to your Department, as well as the CSIR's Meraka Institute for putting together this wonderful event. We trust that this partnership will go from strength to strength in the future.

I thank you.