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Allow me to start off with an apology from EU Ambassador Lodewijk Briët who, due to a number of inflexible commitments, could not be with us today. Let me assure you that Ambassador Briët shares the view on the importance of science and technology to that better life for all. On his behalf I would like to say that we are pleased to have played a role in this successful event, given the crucial issue of addressing industrial and socio-economic development through innovation – and through this, striving for better service delivery.

It is vital that not only the scientific community, but also all other sectors of society, including its businessmen and its policy makers, appreciate the unquestionable importance of applied science and technology in our everyday lives.

The Higher Education Institutions, notably South Africa's Universities of Technology, can and must play a leading role in this quest.

- We are particularly pleased that since 1994, through our ever-deepening partnership, we have been able to contribute in a meaningful way to the development of South Africa's science-, technology- and education sectors. It has been some 15 years since democratic rule dawned in South Africa and despite many challenges, South Africa has managed to set up the institutions essential to a democracy, has developed the policies to improve the quality of life of the vast majority, and has initiated countless programmes targeted at poverty eradication.

- As our partnership matured over the years, we found that relations between South Africa and the EU required increasing coherence, clearer objectives, and a shared forward-looking political vision with a view to strengthening joint political action. Our partnership needed to clearly spell out what each one of us could expect from the other on the domestic, regional, continental and global fronts, and it needed to do justice to both South Africa's and the EU's positions in a rapidly changing and globalising world.

- In response, the European Commission in mid-2006 proposed a coherent, comprehensive, and coordinated long-term strategy for political cooperation with South Africa in a communication entitled "*Towards an EU-South Africa Strategic Partnership*". It laid the foundation for the adoption in 2007 of a Joint Action Plan to give substance to our Strategic Partnership. This does not mean, of course, that we must agree on everything. But it does mean that we agree to engage in an ever more open, concrete and transparent dialogue. The objective is to strengthen and add value to our relations in a mutually beneficial way, further enhancing cooperation between South Africa and the

EU, by moving from political dialogue to shared objectives and strategic cooperation on regional, African and global issues.

- We remain South Africa's largest development partner, by far the largest when we include the support Programmes of our Member States. In 2007 we were able to announce that for the 2007 – 2013 funding period our commitment would be €980 million, or more than R12 bn at today's exchange rates. To increase the effectiveness of these funds, the European Commission, together with the South African Government and 10 EU Member States, jointly drafted the 2007–2013 Country Strategy.
- This Strategy defines that the goal of our development cooperation is to reduce poverty and inequality, in line with Government's policies and targets. Three focal areas exist, namely:
 1. the promotion of pro-poor, sustainable economic growth, including in the second economy;
 2. the improvement of the capacity and provision of basic services for the poor at provincial and municipal level and the promotion of equitable access to social services, including education;
 3. The promotion of good governance.
- In addition to recognising the continued need for cooperation in the education and training sectors, it also acknowledges the potential for continued EU-SA cooperation in the framework of existing agreements in the fields of science

and technology, with the aim of establishing capacity and enabling science-based interventions for poverty alleviation and economic growth promotion.

- Our involvement in the Science and Technology sector has come a long way – looking back we can confidently say that together we have established a strong foundation on which we would like to build an even stronger cooperative partnership with the relevant sector role-players in South Africa.
- 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 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development, which will be implemented until 2013.
- As a South African initiative, the European-South Africa Science and Technology Advancement Programme, a Specific Support Action implemented by the South African Department of Science and Technology, has already contributed significantly to enhancing support and assistance available to both South African and European researchers to optimally leverage mutual benefits from the partnership. At present, some €7 million have already been directed to South African beneficiaries.
- Various fora have been created to continue and foster our dialogue. These include the upcoming SA-EU Summit (which will be held this year in the Western Cape in September) and the Joint Science and Technology

Cooperation Committee (the next meeting of which will be held in September in Brussels).

- The first meeting of the South Africa – European Union Space Dialogue was held in Pretoria in January this year. The latter event brought together the South African Government represented by the Department of Science and Technology, the European Commission and the European Space Agency, to discuss and agree on actions to advance space cooperation between South Africa and the EU, in areas such as Earth observation, global navigation satellite systems and space science.

- Wider afield, in the ACP region, the European Commission is currently funding two grant-based programmes.
 1. the ACP S&T Capacity Building programme, which originated from a joint and systematic ACP-EU approach in the field of research and innovation. The focus is to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of employment creation, poverty eradication and building strong scientific and technological capacities to support research, development and innovation.

 2. The ACP Information & Communication Technologies Programme that is aimed at enhancing the capacity of ACP countries to make informed choices about how to harness ICT as a driver of development and to assist policy makers to embed ICT in a strategic and cost-effective way in their sector programmes.

- Closer to home (...and closer to my heart...), we are particularly proud of a pilot programme known as the Innovation for Poverty Alleviation Sector Policy Support Programme. It was approved in 2007 and will see some €30 million being directed to South Africa between now and 2012. This programme has the main aim of supporting the South African Government's White Paper on Science and Technology and the National Research and Development Strategy. It will contribute to the Department of Science and Technology's policy and strategy of using science and technology for reducing poverty through job creation, SME development, economic growth and the improvement of the quality of life.

- More specifically, this budget support initiative seeks to support stakeholders and activities in the Science and Technology sector aimed at:
 1. Creating sustainable livelihoods, especially in terms of pilot small-scale industries in agro-processing and aquaculture in rural areas, through the transfer of appropriate technologies into rural communities.

 2. The application of S&T for improved social services and infrastructure.

 3. High-impact health initiatives including research programmes for tuberculosis, SA-specific malaria and for initiatives aimed at the prevention of HIV/AIDS infection).

4. Human capital development, essential for reducing poverty in the long term, includes the systematic investment in intellectual development, particularly in S&T amongst those from impoverished backgrounds.
 5. ICTs for access to government services and S&T in rural areas.
 6. Knowledge transfer through technology stations established at Universities of Technology
 7. The development and improvement of climate change science and response;
 8. The strengthening of DST as an institution, and an increase in resources for S&T efforts targeting poverty reduction.
- Through this programme, we wish to enter into a phase of structured policy dialogue with the South African Government and with the Science and technology sector on the crucial topic of poverty eradication and the role that science, technology and innovation could play in the upliftment of those communities in dire need of it.
 - Our support to the Higher Education Sector in South Africa has also come a long way since the mid-90s. Today the Higher Education HIV/AIDS Programme (HEAIDS) is a nationally co-ordinated initiative to develop and strengthen the capacity of South Africa's higher education sector to respond comprehensively to the challenges posed by the HIV/AIDS

pandemic and to play a leadership role in the South African HIV/AIDS response. It is targeted at both students and staff.

- I am also proud to announce that South Africa will from late-2009 onwards be part of the prestigious Erasmus Mundus Programme. 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 through cooperation between Europe and Third Countries.
- In essence, cooperation in this programme will allow South African and European Universities to form consortia that will enable the mobility of South African students and academics to Europe. Grants will be made available to Higher Education Consortia based on specific priority fields, which are in line with the current skills needs of the country. Academic merit of potential students will be promoted. Additionally, academics will be provided with the opportunity to train, teach and do research work at selected European Institutions.

Lastly, the recent Medium Term Strategic Framework (which is appropriately titled: *"Together doing more and better"*) has stipulated in no uncertain terms Vision 2025 for the country. We are delighted to see that strategic priorities include (and I quote a few):

- Recognising that science and technology innovation and development are important sources of industrial competitiveness and sustaining growth;

- 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.
- Speeding up growth and transforming the economy to create decent work and sustainable livelihoods.

Whatever the challenges are in these sectors, we are confident that these will be addressed as part of a combined and concerted developmental effort to tackle these challenges head-on. The EU remains committed to this process and will partner in an active dialogue to ensure that our priorities are aligned with those of the Government of South Africa.

In closing, I must praise the efforts of all those involved in the promotion of innovation, science and technology across all sectors in the country. It is evident that the Government of South Africa, together with its implementation partners, is cognisant of the needs of its people and is actively working towards improving service delivery, alleviating poverty, educating its students and finding solutions that seek to uplift the peoples of the country.

I thank you.