

Media release

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For Immediate Release

UK-South Africa Newton Fund: a science and innovation partnership

The United Kingdom and South Africa are determined to take their already strong science and innovation relationship to the next level and have therefore agreed to launch a fund embodying this partnership based on the principles of co-ownership and co-responsibility. The UK-South Africa Newton Fund will bring together contributions from both sides to support science, technology and innovation, creating a catalyst to stimulate socio-economic development in South Africa and more widely across sub-Saharan Africa. Both countries will also be looking actively to work closely with other African countries in this initiative.

The UK and South Africa have jointly committed up to R140m per year under the Newton Fund, including funding from non-governmental bodies and the private sector, such as GlaxoSmithKline.

The Fund will support projects in the thematic areas of public health, environment and food security, and science and technology capacity building, with a focus on seeking to ensure that activities have a regional footprint, with the ultimate aim of encouraging research that boosts jobs and growth. There will also be a special focus on “big data”.

The UK Minister for Africa, James Duddridge, and South Africa's Minister of Science and Technology, Naledi Pandor, signed a memorandum of understanding for the first three years of the programme to this effect in Cape Town on 9 September.

Speaking at the launch, Minister Pandor welcomed the cooperation, saying the two countries enjoyed strong bilateral relations in numerous areas of mutual interest, including various engagements that emphasised societal development.

The medical research councils of both countries also announced three-year partnerships to collaborate on research projects in the areas of tuberculosis and non-communicable diseases, which will likely see wider non-government participation too.

UK Royal Academies, together with the National Research Foundation, announced a scheme for 90 Fellowships and 150 mobility grants.

The South African-United Kingdom Bilateral Forum, which is the high-level mechanism through which relations between the two countries are conducted, was established in 1997. It will next meet in September 2015, where science and technology will be important themes.

South Africa and the UK signed a bilateral agreement on science and technology cooperation in February 1995, focusing on areas such as climate change, biotechnology, astronomy and global change.

Like South Africa, the United Kingdom aims to build on its world-class research, increase business investment in research and development spending, ensure a strong supply of scientists, engineers and technologists, and raise public interest in and awareness of scientific research and innovative applications.

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