

## **South Africa and Belgium to cooperate in science and technology**

On January 26th 2017 South Africa and Belgium have signed a five-year cooperation agreement that will see the two countries implement joint research and innovation initiatives.

The agreement, signed by the Minister of Science and Technology, Naledi Pandor, and the Secretary of State for Science Policy, Elke Sleurs, will be implemented by the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO) and by South Africa's Department of Science and Technology (DST).

The memorandum of understanding (MoU) is set to promote the exchange of scientific information and expertise between the two countries and facilitate the hosting of joint seminars and training on aspects of mutual interest such as climate change, marine and Antarctic science, biodiversity and space science.

A joint committee of cooperation will be established to ensure the objectives of the MoU are achieved.

BELSPO manages 10 federal scientific institutes, including the Royal Museum for Central Africa (which, through research into zoology, geology, anthropology, history, forestry and agriculture, adds to knowledge towards sustainable development in Africa), the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (which studies biodiversity, development and the natural environment) and the Royal Belgian Institute for Space Aeronomy (which plays a central role in the study of global climate change).

Bilateral relations between South Africa and Belgium were formalised in 2004. Belgium is an important South African trading partner, with imports and exports amounting to billions. Belgium is also a vital source of foreign direct investment in South Africa, particularly in the areas of mining, green energy, ports, logistics and agriculture sectors.

South Africa already has an agreement with the government of Flanders (a region of Belgium), which was signed in 1996. In this framework research cooperation is ongoing in several domains.

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