

## **Minister Pandor's closing address to the Science Forum South Africa 2017, CSIR, Pretoria**

Ministers, ladies and gentlemen, participants in the Science Forum South Africa 2017, who have admirably stayed the course till this late hour – all protocols are observed. At the end of two days of vibrant debate we are among friends, which permits perhaps a degree of lesser formality.

The theme of our may be to ignite conversation about science but it is not a talk shop. As emphasized by Deputy President in his keynote address yesterday, it is a call to action to build a strong coalition, to put science at the service of our society, advancing Africa's and indeed global sustainable development.

At the end of our proceedings, in addition to the many inspirational "take home messages", we all will take with us from this Forum, I would like to share with you three concrete actions my Department, inspired by the engagements at this Forum, will taking to bolster our efforts to put Africa at service of Africa's development agenda.

**I should recall that as a result of the first Science Forum South Africa, the African Open Science Platform funded by the National Research Foundation and established at the Academy of Science of South Africa, was launched. A Platform, which is now actively supporting policy development in Africa for open science.**

Firstly, there was a strong call at the Forum for governments to invest in science and innovation in Africa and to develop robust national systems of innovation. Deputy President Ramaphosa tasked us to design innovation systems that encourage young people to turn ideas into products and services.

In response to this call, my Department will seek to strategically leverage South Africa's current Chairship of the Southern African Development Community to support the development of national and regional innovation systems in this regard. As political support and appreciation of science is critical, as a first step in partnering with UNESCO, we will facilitating a science and technology policy orientation course for parliamentarians, early in 2018 – hopefully seeing a significant rise in the number of parliamentarians participating in next year's Forum.

Secondly, the training of the next generation of scientists and technologists in Africa, should be the foremost priority for us all. South Africa's science and technology capacities have been significantly enriched by the very successful South African Research Chairs programme implemented by our National Research Foundation. Close to 200 eminent researchers have taken up these Chairs at South African universities, significantly increasing and improving our national research output and providing valuable impetus to advanced researcher training.

In 2017 we commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of one of the most important leaders of South Africa's liberation struggle, the name Oliver Reginald Tambo, who led the African National Congress during the years of exile. Mr Tambo was not only a committed pan-Africanist but also an advocate of science and technology. I am proud to announce that my Department is in advanced discussions with the Tambo family and the Tambo foundation, to create a programme to fund during its first phase five new researchers chairs, based on the South African model, but at universities elsewhere on the African continent. It is our intention that this programme will be called the Oliver Tambo Research Chairs programme. If all goes well, we look forward to welcome these distinguished Chairs to our next Forum.

Thirdly, international collaboration is imperative for the advancement of not only African but global science. There were, thus, many concerted calls throughout the Forum, for a more prominent African participation in global science collaborations. South Africa is determined to respond to this call.

In order to further raise the profile of African science and firmly place African science as the center of attention of the global stage, I am delighted to announce that the South African Cabinet earlier this week gave approval for my Department to engage with the Hungarian Academy of Science and the other organisers of the World Science Forum, to hopefully bring this prestigious event for the first time to the African continent, in 2021. Watch this space, as they say.

I have no doubt that these three actions if successfully executed, will significantly contribute to us achieving the goals we have set out in our Agenda 2063 for Africa and indeed the Sustainable Development Goals.

It would be amiss for me in conclusion not to thank firstly, all our guests from elsewhere in Africa and further afield who have travelled to Tshwane for the Science Forum South Africa 2017, thank you for your friendship and support.

Secondly, I would like to thank all who have contributed to the organisation of the Forum – to Dr Phil Mjwara and the staff of the Department of Science and Technology, and Dr Molapo Qhobela, and the team at the National Research Foundation, my sincere thanks. I do not want to single out any individual, but special thanks to Francois Davel, who behind the scenes is the engine of the Forum.

Thirdly, of course, the Forum would not exist without you – the participants – thank you very much for making the Forum the success it is.

In conclusion, I would like to wish all of you a happy holiday season and everything of the best for 2018. Let us be inspired by Deputy President Ramaphosa's call to work diligently, patiently, and above all smartly – to make science for work for society.