South Africa and Italy step up S&T cooperation

South Africa and Italy have signed a new program of cooperation for the next three years, committing to intensive collaboration in science, technology, and innovation (STI). The cooperation will see the science communities of the two countries collaborating in biotechnology, medicine and health, nanotechnology, new advanced materials, information and communication technology, the environmental sciences, and radio astronomy.

Speaking at the program of cooperation signing event in Pretoria, South Africa, in August, the Department of Science and Technology's Deputy Director-General of International Cooperation and Resources Daan du Toit said, "We need to put more effort into sharing information with our fellow Africans, especially the young people. The Department of Science and Technology is excited about the opportunities to partner with Italy in strengthening STI capacity elsewhere in Africa."

The Ambassador of Italy to South Africa, Vincenzo Schioppa, emphasized the need to strengthen relations further. "Sharing our knowledge and experience and creating job opportunities for South Africa and Italy is vital. We are very proud to be part of this cooperation, and we want to stay here," he said.

South Africa, Ethiopia strengthen bilateral S&T cooperation

South Africa's Science Minister Naledi Pandor received her Ethiopian counterpart, Minister Demitu Hambisa, in Pretoria in August for bilateral talks. The Ministers updated each other on science, technology, and innovation policy developments in South Africa and Ethiopia. Minister Pandor sketched the Department of Science and Technology's plans to contribute to the implementation of South Africa's National Development Plan, while Minister Hambisa outlined the Ethiopian Government's plans to invest in science, technology, and innovation for growth and development. The two Ministers accordingly agreed to expedite the finalization of a bilateral South Africa-Ethiopia Agreement on Cooperation in Science and Technology, which should be concluded before the end of 2014.

Possible focus areas of cooperation will include institutional capacity-building for research funding agencies, innovation support measures including initiatives such as the development of science and technology parks, research and innovation for the agro-processing industry, and cooperation between national academies of science. A fellowship scheme, which will provide for short-term training opportunities in South Africa for young Ethiopian researchers, is also envisaged.

Pandor said, "We are eager to expand our partnership with Ethiopia, a country to which Africa will always be indebted to for its selfless contributions to continental cooperation and integration over many decades. South Africa is ready to support the Ethiopian Governments in its science, technology, and innovation capacity-building efforts but also look forward to learn from Ethiopia's success for example in improving agricultural productivity."

The Ministers also agreed that South Africa and Ethiopia should join efforts in supporting the implementation of the African Union's new Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa adopted by African Heads of State in July 2014. □

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