

**Address by Naledi Pandor MP, Minister of Science and Technology, at the launch of Swiss-SA bilateral research chair in global environmental health, UCT, Cape Town, 3 June 2015**

Dr M. Price, UCT Vice-Chancellor;  
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Prof. Mohamed Aqiel Dalvie

The South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) focuses on established scientists, supporting frontier research and innovation, while at the same time strengthening the human capital development pipeline for the next generation of researchers and emerging researchers. The SARChI project began with 21 chairs in 2006 and has grown to 150 occupied chairs in diverse disciplines across the natural sciences, engineering, humanities and social sciences. It's now a R470 million a year strategic intervention.

Each of these research chairs supervises, on average, three times the number of honours, master's and doctoral students supervised by other established researchers rated by the NRF or holding research grants. This is partly because each research chair has more than five times the number of postdoctoral fellows of other established researchers.

International cooperation has consistently been an important aspect of our various national research and innovation programmes and strategies. Today South Africa has a diverse portfolio of international science and technology partnerships. Amongst these, we regard our bilateral relations with Brazil, China, India and Russia, and the strengthening of cooperation within the BRICS framework, as a strategic priority of the

greatest importance. But our relationships with European countries and with Switzerland in particular are deeply rooted.

In 2007 South Africa and Switzerland agreed to cooperate in science and technology, which includes the fields of public health and bio-medicine, biotechnology, nanotechnology, as well as human and social sciences. We established a joint research programme administered by our Council for Scientific and Industrial Research and the University of Basel. The call for research projects covered human and social science, biotechnology, nanotechnology, public health and biomedicine.

Phase I of the cooperation contributed immensely to South African human capital development objectives, and so we moved into phase II in November 2012, administered by our National Research Foundation and the Swiss National Science Foundation. This call covered the areas of human and social science, biotechnology, nanotechnology, public health, biomedicine, clean and green technology. As part of Phase II, we decided to establish bilateral research chairs. The first two of these research chairs are at the University of the Witwatersrand, held by Profs. Loren Landau (chair in migration) and Melissa Steyn (chair in diversity). Today we launch the third bilateral Swiss-SA chair that Prof. Mohamed Aqiel Dalvie will hold in the field of global environmental health.

We appreciate the growth in Swiss-SA science collaboration. The joint research programme has encouraged direct institutional links and collaborations between our respective higher education and research institutions. It has also supported the active participation of both countries in the European Framework programmes. Under the current Seventh Programme, 66 Swiss and South African partners are collaborating on 28 projects (mainly in the fields of environment,

food/agriculture/biotech and health). We hope that further cooperation and projects will be developed and funded through research and development programmes for which both parties are eligible.

We are currently exploring new common research fields such as energy, in particular renewable sources of energy, energy security and clean technology.

South Africa is strongly committed to extending and actively encouraging cooperation in the fields of science and technology in the years to come. We value such cooperation as an important contribution towards addressing complex research issues and global challenges, not only for the benefit of the people of Switzerland and South Africa, but also for mankind as a whole.

Public health is a public good and is at the heart of the post-2015 development agenda. The launch of this chair today is an important indicator of our belief that now is the time to move concerted forward with new partnership models to benefit global public and environmental health.

In closing, I would like to mention three examples of successful partnership initiatives, which provide a good idea how mutually beneficial cooperation could best be constructed.

First, major research infrastructures should be located in developing countries, to develop, attract and retain talent. A good example of this is the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, which have campuses in Cape Town and New Delhi.

Second, regional cooperation in science and technology should be intensified, especially to address policy priorities such as public health, which due to the inter-connectedness between countries, are best addressed at the regional level. Here I would like to mention the Southern African Biosciences Initiative, a programme of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, which brings together several countries of the Southern African Development Community.

Third, and last, international partnerships should be co-owned and co-determined by all its constituents. Developing countries today are at the forefront of global scientific discovery, as highlighted for example by the pioneering work undertaken in South Africa in areas such microbicides to prevent HIV-Aids, as well as drug and vaccine development for malaria and tuberculosis. This is shown by the full participation, including as funding parties and equal partners, by South Africa and other African countries in the European Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership.

I thank you.