

**THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION, DR
BLADE NZIMANDE ON THE OCCASION OF THE EUREKA MINISTERIAL
ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION UNDER THE THEME “EUREKA AS A KEY DRIVER
FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION”**

22 June 2022

Minister Fortunato; fellow Ministers, High Level Representatives and participants of Eureka, thank you for this opportunity to speak at this roundtable on “Eureka as a driver for sustainability and innovation”

As the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation in South Africa, I hold the value of our linkages with the European science, technology and innovation system in high esteem.

It is therefore a great pleasure to be attending the 2022 Eureka Ministerial Conference under the Chairpersonship of Portugal.

Global humanity today faces unprecedented challenges ranging from rapid climate change, energy and food insecurity, health pandemics and rising levels of social and economic inequality. It is decidedly impossible to tackle these challenges for the greater good of humanity without working across large scales and with greater impact using the best of science and most promising technologies to build the resilience, adaptability and prosperity of our societies.

South Africa deeply values the partnership within the Eureka network as it provides many important platforms for pushing the boundaries of scaled-up and high-impact innovations to occur between the world of science and industry.

As South Africa we continue to grow our participation in Eureka, having renewed our associate membership recently. We are also looking forward to working with new partners joining Eureka from outside the European Union.

South Africa itself is committed to strong bilateral science, technology and innovation collaboration within the EUREKA network around key areas of digital transition, green technologies, and the space-ocean-earth observation nexus.

In space science, our government is working very closely with European partners, including Portugal, in the pioneering Square Kilometre Array (SKA) astronomy project and we hope to collaborate in new initiatives to train next generation astronomy scientists and engineers.

Our country has recently adopted a Decadal Science Technology and Innovation (STI) Plan which also foregrounds the need to rapidly improve scientific understanding of the complex interfaces of space-ocean-earth systems in the context of climate change and resource constraints, and we hope to open up a new frontier of cooperation with EUREKA partners.

In the field of health, South Africa is also committed to building strong international partnerships in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, focusing on building

domestic vaccine manufacturing and innovation capabilities, improving epidemiological surveillance and diagnostic tools, modernizing our public healthcare system and strengthening social resilience for the future. the recent launching of a new mRNA vaccine technology transfer hub is one such example.

I am pleased to see under the portfolio of Eureka projects that South Africa participates in the WASTEWATER4COVID project which aims to develop new technologies for detecting viral particles in wastewater to South Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Within the South African innovation landscape, the role of SMEs is key in driving economic growth and creating employment opportunities.

Our Technology Stations Programme continues to be one of the main instruments for providing technological support to SMEs, with some 18 Technology Stations focus on a range of services, including Agro-Processing, Chemicals, Clothing & Textile, Automotive Industry and Tooling Sector.

We also have a Grassroots Innovation Programme aimed at commercialising local innovations from citizens using local resources and capabilities working outside the realm of formal innovation institutions.

South Africa is also very keen to expand STI cooperation on the African continent, building on opportunities presented within the EUREKA network for South-South and South-North partnerships. The AU Agenda 2063 as well as the outcomes of the recent AU-EU Summit earlier this year, have provided some of the key support for such engagements.

In this leg of the Eureka conference, I am travelling with a delegation consisting of SMEs from South Africa, who over the next few days will be participating at the Global Innovation Summit as well as engaging with opportunities with other SMEs from Eureka partners to seek collaboration.

I sincerely hope that our engagements over the next few days will serve to further strengthen innovation partnerships under Eureka, culminating in new cooperation opportunities.

Thank you