

SA, Norway tap into science to grow ocean economy

South Africa and Norway are exploring new business opportunities in the blue economy and other innovative solutions to address global challenges such as rising poverty, inequality and increased demand for energy.



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The South Africa-Norway Science Week 2016 has officially opened at The Innovation Hub in Pretoria. Events for the week, which will wrap up on Friday, will be hosted in Pretoria and Cape Town.

Speaking at the start of the week on Monday, Science and Technology Minister Naledi Pandor said the event was opportune to bring together key players from higher education, research, innovation and business from the two countries to forge relationships and encourage collaboration between academia and industry across national borders.

“International cooperation and benchmarking provide important platforms for understanding and promoting the contribution of science and technology to economic development, especially in a global post-industrial, knowledge-based economy, whose principal imperative must be to enhance sustainability and green growth,” the minister said.

The blue economy is the focal point of this year’s Science Week. The ocean space is a strategic priority for both countries, and the challenges and opportunities derived from these strategies provide a fertile basis for innovation and business development.

South Africa and Norway have an existing portfolio of science and technology partnerships to advance the blue economy. Both are members of the new international Martera platform, which will support collaboration in the domain of maritime and marine technologies.

They are also part of the EU Horizon 2020 project, Ecopotential, where South Africa and Norway are leading the work to leverage Earth observation to improve marine ecosystem services.

The two countries are also partners in the Atlantos project seeking to develop an integrated Atlantic Ocean Observing System.

Collaborating in renewable energy

Minister Pandor also identified renewable energy technology as a major field with plenty of opportunity for South Africa and Norway to deepen cooperation.

“Not only does it present opportunities for us to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it also presents new opportunities for technology transfer and innovation to enhance developing countries’ technological capability to create new renewable energy industrial clusters.

“By facilitating the creation of a new renewable energy industry, the South African government is helping to create more wealth and jobs, also for our international partners. It is an area where I think South Africa and Norway can intensify cooperation.

“With 99% of electricity production in Norway coming from hydropower plants, renewable energy is an area where Norway has important expertise, as evidenced by its role as one of the world’s largest producers of silicon solar cells,” the minister said.

She said participants in Science Week must use the platform to strengthen scientific collaboration and partnership between the countries, and popularise science and technology among the young people of Norway and South Africa.

South Africa and Norway are part of ERAfrica, which aims to create a European Research Area Network (ERA-NET) for the African continent. South Africa has also been an active partner of CAAST-Net, and as of 2013, it has been a partner of CAAST-NET Plus, which is a consortium of 26 African and European partners dedicated to advancing bi-regional cooperation in science and technology.

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