

SA needs to build its research and development capacity

Science and Technology Minister Naledi Pandor says the Ebola outbreak in West Africa has illustrated how there is an urgent need to accelerate focused investment in research in Africa.



Science and Technology Minister Naledi Pandor says that more research and development is needed in Africa and that greater investments should be made to ensure this happens. Image: GCIS

West Africa is struggling to contain the virus that is devastating West Africa, with a death toll of more than 4,000 people, most of whom are from Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Speaking in New York at the European Organisation for Nuclear Research's (CERN) celebration of 60 years of peaceful development Pandor said science has been a significant contributor to social development in many parts of the world, citing breakthroughs to eradicate diseases such as polio and smallpox as a result of drugs and vaccines.

"It is imperative for Africa's scientists to work in Africa if they are to support development on the continent and if they are to play a role in technology transfer to drive innovation," Pandor said. She referred to the Square Kilometre Array, being built in the Northern Cape, which would result in a brain gain for Africa for the first time in four decades.

Sub-Saharan Africa contributes about 2.3% of world's Gross Domestic Product, but is responsible for only 0.4% of global expenditure on research and development. With 13.4% of the world's population, it is home to only 1.1% of the world's scientific researchers.

"Building world-class research infrastructure was one of the pillars for building competitive, knowledge-based activities to attract the best human capital resources," Pandor said, adding that she was pleased by the significant contribution CERN

had made to increasing world knowledge in new areas of scientific research.

"We are pleased that several African countries have scientists who have participated in the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) research initiatives and we congratulate the leadership of CERN, who have been true world scientists seeking to attract scholars from the global community," she said.

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