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Sent: Thursday, 14 September 2017 8:38 AM
To: Sue
Subject: Media Release: Investigating SET's role in the SDGs



Investigating SET's role in the SDGs

The [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) focus on ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring prosperity for all by 2030. Research and innovation have a role to play, but where, when and how?

First the United Nations organised the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Then came the SDGs, endorsed by South Africa in 2014.

The SDGs can be grouped into five categories, showing alignment with the [National Development Plan](#) (NDP) and the African Union's [Agenda 2063](#)

- People (social development)
- Prosperity (economic development)
- Planet (environmental sustainability)
- Peace (peaceful and inclusive societies)
- Partnerships (means of implementation)

The National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF) brought stakeholders together for a 'Research and innovation to support the SDGs' Discussion Forum. This was held from 4-5 September 2017 in Gauteng. South Africa will be reporting on SDG progress in 2019 and it's imperative that the science, engineering and technology (SET) community understands its role.

The NSTF provides neutral collaborative platforms where issues and sectors meet

One of the National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF) functions is to hold discussion forums, bringing the private and public sector together to make connections.

Feedback from these discussion forums is given to stakeholders, including government.

This event was conceptualised and planned by the **NSTF committee of [Science Councils and Statutory Bodies representatives](#)**

SA baseline measurements: Compared to the MDGs, the SDGs have more goals (from 8 to 17), more indicators/measurements (from 60 to 230), and more targets (from 20 to 169). In

his [presentation](#), Statistician-General Pali Lehohla noted that the South African SDG baseline report will be available on [Statistics South Africa website](#) on 9 October 2017.

Coordinating role of the Department of Science and Technology (DST): The DST's [Dr Isayvani Naicker](#) says that the DST has a role to play across all the SDGs, particularly around enabling partnerships. This falls in line with the DST mission to develop, coordinate and manage a National System of Innovation. Coordination becomes crucial – What are people doing? Where is the duplication? How can resources be mobilised into the most-needed areas?

SET is seen as enablers for the SDGs: The Presidency is charged with collating and reporting. To reach that point, there is a need for monitoring and evaluation across government departments, business, civil society etc. SET is recognised as an enabler in the successful implementation of the SDGs, and will also help in monitoring and evaluation.

Framework around the science agenda

Of particular note is the [presentation](#) by Water Research Commission's CEO Dhesigen Naidoo.

The WRC has taken core SDGs and reconceptualised them into a framework around the science agenda with the aim of creating an inter-related knowledge agenda.

Another key point is that not all projects will necessarily fit into the SDGs, nor should the goals be regarded as the ultimate aim – if we want SA to thrive, the SDGs must be exceeded.

Mr Lorenzo Raynard from SKA SA explained that it's important to evaluate projects against the SDGs but it's not about ticking boxes. There should be meaningful alignment.

A [Global Innovation Exchange \(GIE\)](#) has been created. This is a platform for innovators, funders and experts to connect and share relevant information. This includes connecting with complementary initiatives both online and off. It's about linking global resources, ease of access, reduced duplication and rapidly deploying the most successful innovations.

Aligned with this, is the [South African Sustainable Development Knowledge Hub](#). It's in the process of being developed and aims to connect development actors with research and innovations around the SDGs and other African development goals.

Moving from the MDGs to the SDGs: According to the UNDP's Lindiwe Dhlamini in '[Integrating agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\) into regional and national development plans and strategies](#)', there are 3 fundamental differences between the MDGs and the SDGs:

- The SDGs "include all three dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental".
- "The SDGs are complex and integrated, with the integrated approach implying the need to manage trade-offs and maximise synergies across targets."
- "The SDGs should benefit all – eradicating poverty and reducing inequalities. The promotion and use of disaggregated data cannot be emphasised enough."

There is a need "to go beyond silos and take an integrated approach to development interventions". Dhlamini notes that the MDG question focused on which goals lagged and the gaps. The SDGs question is: "What are the actions that will take us forward more quickly across a broader range of interlinked goals?"

The importance of partnerships for the goals (SDG 17): The CSIR's Dr Lorren Haywood

explained that SDG 17 is critical for achieving the other SDGs. However, it is often ranked as the lowest priority. She is part of a team conducting research around collaboration. The ultimate aim is to devise a trans-disciplinary evidence-based approach for establishing and implementing partnership relationships.

The CSIR's research to date shows five key clusters of actors needed to achieve the SDGs – United Nations (governance and support from an international perspective), government (enabling and monitoring environment), business (implementation), research and development (knowledge, technologies and innovation), and civil society (advocacy and awareness).

Currently there is a lack of partnerships and cooperation between clusters. This is specifically within government (ie between national, provincial and local levels), and between government, the private sector and civil society.

Communication, coordination, collaboration and funding are imperative. It's clear that there needs to be a lot more communication around the SDGs, aligned funding mechanisms, and coordinating activities (from explanations on monitoring and evaluation to reporting frameworks). There also needs to be a great deal more collaboration around common goals. A centralised facilitation agency was proposed.

The research institutions play a crucial role in achieving the SDGs and NDP. The state's budget allocation to such institutions should not continually be cut, but rather increased.

Video clips with the full presentations and discussion can be found on the [NSTF web site](#). The NSTF will be reporting back on the SET community's engagement with the SDGs. Please send information to enquiries@nstf.org.za

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About the NSTF

The National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF), established in 1995, is a broadly-representative stakeholder body for all SET and innovation organisations in South Africa, which seeks to influence policy formulation and delivery.

The NSTF Awards are unique in SA, recognising the outstanding contributions of individuals and groups to SET and innovation.

The science bursaries page <http://www.nstf.org.za/bursary/> provides information on bursaries and bursary providers for science, engineering and related studies.

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