

FOREWORD

Ideas ignite solutions. Solutions fuel a knowledge-based economy. Such an economy serves its society.

An intelligent car that won't start if it detects your blood alcohol level is too high; a vaccine imbibed via mother's milk to prevent children from dying of malaria; a microchip that warns mining supervisors when their nightshift workers are getting drowsy.

This is not science fiction. This is science reality. Such solutions become reality when enquiring minds are given wings to fly beyond the boundaries of traditional thinking, and funding modalities to make things happen.

At the 2010 National Postdoctoral Research Forum – the second forum of its kind to be hosted by the NRF – I believe you will be given a glimpse of the future you can help create. The National Research Foundation (NRF) is there to help you in a number of ways.

As last year's event proved, the National Postdoctoral Research Forum provides a meeting place for postdoctoral researchers in South Africa to share ideas on how to tackle the challenges they face in career-path planning and funding. It offers a forum in which vibrancy, enthusiasm and passion for the research environment can be rekindled, where researchers and industry players can come together to create partnerships that will ensure sustainable research excellence and long-lasting partnerships in the academic research environment.

This year's programme promises further exploration into the realms of possibility that beckon for postdoctoral fellows with appropriate skills, access and support. Topics such as peer reviews

are open for interrogation, while science-related controversies prepare young scientists for the communication skills they will undoubtedly need going forward.

I was particularly heartened when the Minister of Science and Technology, Ms Naledi Pandor, recently approved the DST's reprioritised departmental 2010/11 budget. This supports the increased production of high-level skills needed to underpin the National Research and Development Strategy.

The R100m allocated for human resource development will support the national policy priority of growing and changing the equity profile of researchers and academics; supporting emerging researchers, particularly black and women researchers; and providing appropriate and adequate research infrastructure.

Such commitment brings the NRF closer to its vision and mission of contributing to the knowledge economy in South Africa through world-class research, a transformed society and a sustainable environment and to attain at least 1% of global research and development output by 2015. In other words, our ambition is for the South African science system to punch well above its weight globally.

Postdoctoral fellows are critical partners in making this vision a reality.

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