

## **Global solutions to global challenges**

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The most recent global financial crisis served as yet another reminder of the extent of globalisation in this first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The world wide climate change and global warming dialogue together with the discussions on the rate of progress with the Millennium Development Goals have all served to emphasis the old African concept of 'Ubuntu'. Ubuntu dictates that the state of health of an individual or individual country both influences and is directly dependent on the health of the community or in the case of a country – the international community. This creates further impetus for the development of collaborative global knowledge partnerships to address global and local challenges.

The South Africa-Germany partnership represents important opportunities in this regard. This must involve a partnership between these two countries that organises to operate at various levels.

Collaborative partnerships are generally organised into one of three levels. The first is the classical bilateral partnership of country to country or institution to institution. This will be in the context of the South Africa Germany Bilateral Cooperation Agreement and the supporting Programme of cooperation.

The second involves the two countries being members of a larger common interest consortium with further players that the author labels a poly-lateral collaboration modality. In the African context this modality has a further twist and many would argue a further opportunity to contribute to a broader global sustainable development agenda. This could be in the form of a tripartite project between South Africa, Germany and an African Least Developed Country (LDC) where South Africa and Germany carry the costs of their participation and a German Development Agency funds the participation of the LDC. The third is where the two partners are members of a multilateral platform developing and implementing its decisions and work programmes. The global platforms that will demand science for sustainability cooperation will include the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and the supporting Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and all other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) to which South Africa and Germany are both signatories and active parties. In this context, both countries have the opportunity to lead the implementation of these agreements through science for sustainability partnership projects. A subset of this category are the African multilaterals. In particular the AU/NEPAD platforms for both Science and Technology as well as the Environment in the form of cooperation that takes forward the sustainable implementation of the Africa Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action and the AU/NEPAD Environment Plan.

These relationships and actions have to be organised in a nesting that organises for the bilateral activities to add value to the achievement of the multilateral goals and that the multilateral projects strengthen the bilateral relationship. Further, these two sets of activities should actively seek opportunities for the third modality of poly-lateral projects.

It is through these collaborative efforts that we will be able to afford partners in both countries to have the benefit of critical mass development, multidisciplinary and diverse teams, access to the global laboratory as well as the opportunity to develop solutions for

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local, regional and global conditions in a manner that adds value and capacity to the locality of the challenges.

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