

Green economy offers a double dividend

PRETORIA: Science and Technology Minister Naledi Pandor says government will make the best of opportunities in the green economy to create jobs and cut carbon emissions.



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"In our view, the green economy offers a double dividend - more low-carbon jobs and less carbon emissions," she said on Monday, 18 August.

The minister was speaking during the 5th International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) conference on green chemistry in Durban.

Green chemistry, also called sustainable chemistry, is a philosophy of chemical research and engineering that encourages the design of products and processes that minimise the use and generation of hazardous substances.

"It's clear that high-tech innovations will help employment grow over the long term, as new technology spreads throughout the economy and transforms other, larger sectors," the minister said.

She said South Africa takes green chemistry for sustainable development very seriously.

"South Africa's chemical industry is of substantial economic significance, contributing around 5% to our gross domestic product (GDP) and approximately 25% of our manufacturing sales," she said on Monday.

She said powerful forces are driving a green economic revolution worldwide, providing in the process a strong lever for broad-based economic development in many parts of the globe, and often re-orienting national development trajectories.

"South Africa, having one of the most carbon-intensive economies in the world, is no exception. Our government is strongly committed to unleashing the potential of the green economy," the Minister said.

Sustainable development is a core organising idea in the National Development Plan (NDP) that South Africa adopted only recently in 2012.

It sets out a vision 2030 for South Africa, with key targets to be met and identifies specific steps for implementation.

The NDP endorses the need to move to a low carbon economy, while acknowledging that this transition will require innovative solutions.

"It is important for us to understand the implications of our development plans on future carbon emissions, to ensure that future growth is not carbon intensive," the Minister said.

She said cities in this country and around the world need to become leaders in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The main objective of the conference is to emphasise the importance of green chemistry for sustainable development, and to promote novel research and collaborations, by bringing together experts and interested parties from all over the world and from diverse bodies - from the academia to the industry and to governments.

Delegates at the conference will pay special attention to the roles of green chemistry in fast-growing economies and to the promotion of green chemistry in the African continent.

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