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| MEMORANDUM FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE |

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 1202**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 12/06/2020**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 20 OF 2020**

**Prof B Bozzoli (DA) to ask the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology:**

(a) For how long did his department engage with a certain company (name furnished) regarding the introduction of a comprehensive innovation plan in the townships of the Republic, (b) on what grounds was this engagement pursued, (c) on what date did the engagement come to an end and (d) what were the specific reasons for ending the engagement, given that significant European Union and British potential investment was at stake?

**NW1507E**

**REPLY:**

(a) South Africa has a bilateral science and innovation partnership with the United Kingdom as part of the Newton Fund initiative, which is operational in 17 other countries. The UK-South Africa Newton Fund is administered by the South Africa’s Department for Science and Technology and the UK’s Department of Business, Innovation and Skills.

The Newton Fund is part of the UK’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment. As such, the partnership is required to subscribe to development cooperation principles which include country ownership, a focus on results and accountability, inclusive partnerships, and transparency and mutual accountability.

Matter Innovation is a private sector consultancy domiciled in the United Kingdom. The company was selected, appointed, and contracted by the UK’s Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. United Kingdom (UK) government to implement a specific Newton Fund initiative known as the *Global Innovation Partners Programme* in South Africa.

The DSI engaged with Matter Innovation within the framework of the Newton Fund cooperation in 2018 and 2019.

(b) The engagement was pursued at the request of the United Kingdom Government because Matter Innovation was appointed under the SA-UK Newton Fund bilateral partnership and the intended purpose of the initiative was in line with the mandate of the DSI to strengthen science, technology, and innovation in South Africa.

(c) The engagement ended in 2019 when the contract between Matter Innovation and the UK Government’s Department of Business, Innovation and Skills ended. At this stage there was no mandate or enabling institutional framework to continue the cooperation. Matter Innovation was funded by the UK government to engage in this cooperation.

(d) As highlighted above, the engagement between the DSI and Matter Innovation arose as a result of a Newton Fund supported contract between the UK’s Department of Business, Innovation, and Skills and Matter Innovation. As such, there was no basis for the DSI to continue engagement with Matter Innovation independently. The DSI continues to implement multiple partnerships with the UK Government strengthening science and innovation capacities in South Africa, none of which has been impacted by the discontinuing of the engagement with Matter Innovation. There has never been any link from the Department’s perspective between the engagement with Matter Innovation and cooperation with the EU. The latter continues to flourish.