**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO: 2196**

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**2196. DR A LOTRIET (DA) to ask the Minister of Science and Technology:**

1. **Whether her department is currently involved in a work exchange and/or employment agreement with the Republic of Cuba: if so, (a) What number of Cuban nationals (i) are currently employed and (ii) are due to be employed by her department, (b) What specific work roles are envisaged for the Cuban nationals, (c) what are the specific skills sets of each of the Cuban nationals (i) currently employed and (ii) due to be employed, (d) what are the details of the process followed to ensure that the same skill set was or is not available in the country and amongst South African citizens (e) what is the total cost of the (i) employment or (ii) prospective employment of such Cuban nationals?**

 **NO2508E**

**REPLY:**

**Question 2196**

1. No, there are no Cuban nationals currently employed by the Department of Science and Technology. However, there are scientific exchanges in specific research and development areas facilitated through the Bilateral Scientific and Technological Cooperation Agreement signed in 2001. Important collaborations in the past have focused on biotechnology and nanotechnology, with five related flagship projects implemented from 2005 to 2014, namely:
2. Cholera vaccine development project, supported from 2005;
3. Human monoclonal antibodies, supported from 2006;
4. Pre-clinical drug development, supported from 2006;
5. the use of radio-labelled compounds in medical, biosciences and industrial research, with focus on radio-labelling cancer receptor targeting compounds, supported from 2007; and
6. development of drug delivery systems, lateral flow-point-of-care diagnostic kits and biosensors based on nanoparticles, with focus on new therapeutic radiopharmaceuticals based on monoclonal antibodies, supported from 2007.
7. For each of the above projects, there has been one principal researcher from each side, supported by teams of R&D staff in their organisations. The Cubans involved in the R&D projects are highly qualified scientists in their field of specialisation, most holding Phds in the respective science disciplines they conduct research on.
8. It should be stressed that the Cuban scientists were, however not employed in South Africa but remained based at their own institutions in Cuba.