**MINISTRY**

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION**

 **REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**598. Mrs T P Msane (EFF) to ask the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation:**

What steps have been taken by her department to strengthen relations between South Africa and BRICS countries in areas such as (a) medicine and (b) health research since 2018? **NW730E**

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation coordinates and manages relations between South Africa and BRICS across all three pillars of BRICS cooperation, namely political and security, economic and financial, and people-to-people cooperation. The lead department for international cooperation in medicine and health is the National Department on Health while the lead department for international cooperation in science and research is the Department of Science and Innovation.

The BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre was a key deliverable of South Africa’s BRICS Chairship in 2018. The three departments worked together to ensure that this deliverable was implemented, and a virtual BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre was officially launched on 22 March 2022. The Centre aims to pool together complementary advantages of BRICS countries in vaccine research and development, boost the capacity of BRICS countries to prevent and control infectious diseases and provide timely help to other developing countries in need. In addition, the Centre is expected to prioritise joint research and development of vaccines, facilitate information-and-knowledge sharing and support collaborative projects by researchers and institutions from BRICS countries, and to promote inclusive distribution and use of vaccines to ensure accessibility and affordability.

It is expected that South Africa, during its Chairship of BRICS in 2023, will further consolidate BRICS cooperation in the fields of health, science and innovation.