

## **Meraka Institute and UNDP agreement signed for promotion of FLOSS**

An agreement signed by the CSIR on behalf of the Open Source Centre of the Meraka Institute, by Centre Manager, Nhlanhla Mabaso and the Regional Service Centre for Eastern and Southern Africa of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is set to boost the Open Source capacity for the region through a knowledge networking project. By selecting an indigenous institution such as the Meraka Institute to be the implementing agency, the UNDP hopes to encourage South-South cooperation and extend the benefits of the project into the African region.

Speaking at the event, Luke Wasonga of the UNDP, outlined key aspects of the project, "We anticipate that it will create awareness of and establish a platform for free/libre and open source software (FLOSS) in the region, as well as a knowledge base on how to utilise FLOSS." He pointed out that the promotion of the use of FLOSS will go hand-in-hand with the promotion of partnerships between the public and private sectors in the region and create an environment conducive for entrepreneurship in the production of software.

The agreement is in line with the CSIR mandate, which emphasises the need to improve the quality of life of people in South Africa and the region and also supports government's priorities. Khungeka Njobe (standing in for Phil Hendricks) confirmed, "This project opens up a good opportunity for achieving impact, as FLOSS is a very appropriate technology to make a difference to people's lives. On behalf of the CSIR and the Meraka Institute, we are indeed pleased to have a tangible project to work on with the UNDP, thereby leveraging mutual strengths."

Berenice Lue Marais, CSIR Africa Business Development, indicated the prospect of a strategic overarching Memorandum of Agreement between the CSIR and the UNDP Regional Service Centre, to form the basis of a future partnership.