Minister Barañao: "We are in the process of re-establishing our historic science links with the UK"

Minister of Science & Technology Lino Barañao with Minister of Universities & Science Jo Johnson.

- Argentina’s Minister of Science, Technology and Innovative Production Lino Barañao signed a “Statement of Intent” alongside his British counterpart Jo Johnson to strengthen cooperation in research, development and innovation.

- Alejandro Cecatto, President of Argentina’s National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET), signed an agreement with the Royal Society.

- Argentina’s National Director of Cooperation, Mariano Jordan, renewed the Association Agreement with the European Bioinformatics Institute.

“Science and Technology is one of the pillars in bilateral cooperation as stated in the Joint Statement between Argentina and the UK from September this year”, said the Argentine Ambassador Carlos Sersale di Cerisano.

The Joint Statement served as a framework for Argentine Minister Barañao’s four day mission aimed at promoting science, cooperation and attracting investment in science and technology.

Barañao, who praised the “historic” UK tour, said “it marks a turning point in the reestablishment of dialogue that goes back many years, with a long and fruitful history of working together. We believe that science and technology can provide the base on
which to consolidate a new kind of relationship between both countries. I believe the UK has a great role to play in this new era”.

The busy schedule provided Argentine officials with the opportunity to look into potential areas for cooperation and identify those in which tangible results could be achieved in the short-term: biomedicine, the pharmaceutical industry, hi-tech agriculture and new materials involved in agritech.

AGENDA AND AGREEMENTS
During the meeting with Jo Johnson, Minister of State for Universities and Science, also attended by Argentina’s Ambassador to the UK Carlos Sersale, the ministers discussed mechanisms to increase cooperation in human resource training and working collaboratively in specific matters on the recently rekindled bilateral agenda. They signed a “Statement of Intent” to strengthen cooperation in research, development and innovation in the areas of biosciences, agritech, advanced materials and nanotechnology, ICT, paleontology and marine sciences.

The president of Argentina’s CONICET, Alejandro Cecatto, also took an important step in strengthening relations. Alongside the Foreign Secretary and Vice President of the Royal Society Professor Martyn Poliakoff, they signed a memorandum of understanding on training human resources.

The mission got underway on Monday with a visit to the Crick Institute, where a meeting was held with the Nobel Prize winner for Medicine Sir Paul Nurse. Among other matters, they drew up the guidelines for a public-private international cooperation partnership aiming to provide postdoctoral training for Argentine scientists. Following this, the delegation visited the site and laboratories of GSK in Stevenage, an exemplary case of successful public-private collaboration with high-tech firms in the UK.

Since biomedicine was one of the central areas of interest for the tour, the delegation visited the premises of the European Bioinformatics Institute (EMBL) on Tuesday. The tour culminated in the renewal of the Association Agreement between the Ministry and the laboratory. As one of the three non-European countries linked to the EMBL, Argentine researchers have benefitted from this association.

That evening Barañao held a meeting with Argentine scientists based in the UK. “RAICES (Roots) is a central part of our national science system. It allows us to access information, resources and research infrastructure. Throughout this time, RAICES have contributed in invaluable ways to Argentine science and to building international bonds”, he said.

On his last day, Barañao paid a visit to Kew Gardens, where he met Richard Barley, Head of Horticulture, and David Cope, Director for Strategy and External Affairs, to explore potential collaboration in botanical science and parks management.

“I’m very satisfied with the mission. We have a dossier of initiatives to work on back in Argentina, that we will probably consolidate on next year with official visits and seminars that we are already organising on the back of proposals from this week”, Barañao said summarising his visit to the UK.