

"RAFU Days" in South Africa: New Directions for Russian-South African Cooperation

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"RAFU Days" in South Africa are being held in Pretoria. The program includes negotiations between the Russian delegation and representatives of Universities South Africa (USAf) and South African state bodies, as well as participation in the 4th USAf conference "Co-Creating a Resilient Future," dedicated to the future of higher education and the development of international partnerships.



The delegation of universities of the RAFU Consortium included representatives of Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University, Southern Federal University, and St. Petersburg State University of Industrial Technologies and Design. SPbPU was represented by Alla Mazina, Head of the Project Office of the "Russian-African Network University" Consortium, and Tatiana Sytnikova, Deputy Head of the International Education Department.



One of the key elements of the program was the negotiations of the Russian RAFU delegation with representatives of relevant state bodies and the university community of South Africa. The meetings were attended by representatives of the South African Department of Science, Technology and Innovation — Anneline Morgan, Senior Program Manager for Science, Technology and Innovation, and Cecil Masoka, Acting Director for Bilateral Cooperation — as well as representatives of the South African Department of Higher Education and Training — Mokgadi Rabotata, Director for Global Partnerships, and Assistant Directors for European Affairs and International Scholarships Kgomotso Sekwale and Portia Sibandze.

On the part of the Russian diplomatic mission, the negotiations were attended by Counselor-Envoy Evgeny Sadikov, Science Attaché Viktor Vinogradov, First Secretary Darya Pelyavina, and Third Secretary Polina Kulakova.

The parties discussed the development of interaction between Russian and South African universities, joint educational and scientific projects, academic mobility, and opportunities for expanding scholarship programs for South African citizens. Particular attention was paid to the development of postgraduate education — master's and doctoral programs — as well as to strengthening the research and teaching capacity of South African universities.

Space sciences, materials and mineral processing, biotechnology and bioinformatics, nuclear medicine, and digital technologies — artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and machine learning — were identified as priority areas of cooperation. These areas correspond to South Africa's scientific, technological, and industrial objectives and can become the basis for joint training of specialists and implementation of research projects.

The Russian delegation also visited the University of South Africa — the country's largest university and one of the largest on the continent. During the meeting, Dr. Angie Magabane, Director of Internationalization and Partnerships at UNISA, and Khomotso Mabusela, Specialist for Cooperation in

Internationalization and Partnerships, presented the university's international activities and discussed opportunities for further interaction with Russian universities within RAFU.



"RAFU Days" in South Africa continued with the participation of the Russian delegation in the 4th USAf conference "Co-Creating a Resilient Future." The conference brought together university leaders, government representatives, researchers, students, business, and international partners. The main goal of the event is to find joint approaches to developing sustainable, inclusive universities that respond to the challenges of our time.

USAf CEO Dr. Phethiwe Matutu, addressing the conference participants, noted that the complex challenges facing higher education cannot be solved by universities alone. According to her, meaningful and long-term solutions require cooperation among universities, the state, business, public organizations, students, and international partners.

The complex challenges facing higher education cannot be solved by universities alone. Meaningful and long-term solutions require cooperation between sectors and disciplines, emphasized Dr. Phethiwe Matutu.

South African Minister of Higher Education and Training Buti Manamela addressed the participants at the opening of the conference. *"Before we ask how sustainable our universities are, we must ask what exactly we want to preserve: access to knowledge for those who have historically been deprived of such an opportunity, the ability of society to understand itself, solve its problems, and imagine a different future,"* noted the Minister.

The Russian RAFU delegation took part in three thematic sessions. Participants discussed rethinking the role of the university, university resourcing, and the future of academic activity in the context of artificial intelligence development.

RAFU representatives presented the experience of Russian universities and the activities of the

consortium in the context of sustainable higher education goals. The discussion became an opportunity to compare the approaches of Russian and South African universities to the development of educational and scientific activities, personnel training, innovation, and international cooperation.



The conference theme is directly related to the tasks that the RAFU consortium sets for itself. As USAf organizers note, a modern university must not only adapt to changes but also participate in shaping the future — through knowledge, partnerships, and innovation. Among the key areas of the conference are academic innovation, digital transformation and artificial intelligence, sustainable financing, development of research activities, student success, and the public significance of universities.

"RAFU Days" in South Africa continue the systematic work on developing university partnership between Russia and African countries. The participation of Russian university representatives in the USAf program and direct dialogue with the university community and state bodies of South Africa create the basis for new joint educational, scientific, and academic projects.